TITHING AND THE CHURCH

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TITHING AND THE CHURCH

Gary North

Institute for Christian Economics
Tyler, Texas

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Gary North

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This book is dedicated to

Rev. Joseph **McAuliffe**

who teaches Christians how to get out of debt and stay out of debt through tithing. Everyone wins except the potential lenders.

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PREFACE

What you hold in your hands is unique: a book written by the head of a parachurch ministry, published by that ministry which warns you not to send donations to that ministry unless you have already paid ten percent of your income to your local church.

My personal economic self-interest appears to be opposed to writing and publishing such a book. Because so few people tithe a full ten percent of their income to any church, this book seems to be economically suicidal. If this book does persuade people, they are presumably less likely to send money to any parachurch ministry, including mine.

On the other hand, some readers maybe willing to consider my thesis more readily when they recognize that someone whose personal self-interest seems opposed to such a thesis is nevertheless willing to go into print with it. If nothing else, readers will recognize that I take my thesis seriously. This book could bankrupt my ministry. It is still worth publishing.

There comes a time for someone in the Christian community to remind his fellow Christians of what God had Malachi say in His name, even if this costs his ministry some income:

> Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the

> LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts (Mal. 3:8-12).

Most pastors today do not believe Malachi's warning. Of those who do believe it, there are not many who will go into the pulpit and preach it. Of those who do preach it, they do not preach it often. Of those who preach it often, they find that most members pay no attention except to suggest that the minister preach on something "less worldly"

No church or denomination today is willing to bring sanctions against members who refuse to tithe. Preaching God's law for the church without the ability to enforce it ecclesiastically is an exercise in futility. It is not surprising that pastors refuse to tackle this topic.

Even if they did, tight-fisted members could comfort themselves with this thought "Well, he's not an impartial witness. If everyone started paying his tithe, the church's income would rise, and the pastor might get a raise." The grumblers see self-interest as primarily economic. It never occurs to them that a pastor might preach on tithing because he is afraid that God's warning through Malachi is still in force.

Here is the problem today: most Christians agree with all humanists regarding God's predictable, covenantal, corporate sanctions in history, namely, such sanctions do not exist. But they do exist, which is one reason why I wrote this book. I fear these sanctions. Even if I pay my tithe, I may come under God's corporate negative sanctions. Jeremiah and Ezekiel were carried into captivity by the Babylonians, despite the fact that they had preached the truth to doomed people who paid no attention to the threat of God's predictable, corporate, covenan-

tal sanctions in history. My conclusion: better to persuade Christians to pay their tithes, see donations to this ministry decline, and avoid the sanctions. This is what I call enlightened self-interest. It is called *fearing God.*

It never ceases to amaze me how many Christians do not pursue such enlightened self-interest.

I hope this book encourages pastors to preach on tithing. I hope it encourages church officers to re-think their responsibilities before God and men. I hope it changes the minds of those who read it. I hope it silences those who deny God's covenantal sanctions in history. Finally, I hope it silences anyone who believes in these historical sanctions but who has decided that the local church is not entitled to the tithes of its members. Preaching such a version of the tithe is an ideal way to call down God's sanctions on one's head. I recommend against it.

Part 1

CHURCH SOVEREIGNTY AND THE TITHE

Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually. Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils. And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham: But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better. And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him (Heb. 6:20-7:10).

INTRODUCTION TO PART 1

And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty yearn after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none *effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by premise (G?. 3:17-18).*

Paul makes it plain that God's covenant with Abraham established the promise that was fulfilled in a preliminary fashion by Moses, but in a culminating fashion by Jesus Christ, the promised Seed (Gal. 3:16). The New Covenant has a major part of its origin in this Old Covenant promise given to Abraham.[1] The church's judicial claim to this Abrahamic inheritance rests not on the Mosaic law but on the Abrahamic promise.

This is a familiar doctrine to Protestant commentators, from Luther to the present, but its implications for ecclesiology have not always been clearly recognized. What God promised to Abraham was crucial for establishing the authority of the church and the gospel: a future Seed. But Abraham was not a lone ecclesiastical agent. He was under ecclesiastical authority. The mark of his subordination was his payment of a tithe to Melchizedek, the king-priest of Salem, a man without parents: "Without father, without mother, without descent, having nei-

1. The other major part is the promise in Genesis 3:15: the seed of the woman.

ther beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually" (Heb. 7:3). Furthermore, as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews makes clear, the Mosaic priesthood in the tribe of Levi was representatively subordinate to a higher priesthood, one established apart from any family. Jesus Christ, a son ofJudah rather than Levi, traced His priestly office to Melchizedek, not to Levi or Aaron. His is a higher priesthood than theirs, for Melchizedek's was.

When the Epistle to the Hebrews equates the priestly office of Jesus Christ with the priesthood of Melchizedek, it makes a very important ecclesiastical point. The authority of the church in dispensing the sacraments of bread and wine, which Melchizedek gave to Abraham (Gen. 14:18), is not derived from the priestly office under the Mosaic Covenant. *The Melchizedekan priesthood is judicially superior to the Levitical.* "Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him" (Heb. 7:9b-10). The New Covenant's communion meal is the restoration of the Old Covenant's covenantal feast of Salem. The Lord's Supper is analogous judicially to the Passover, but the bread and wine of Melchizedek had greater authority than Passover.

In our day, it is common to hear Christians dismiss as "Mosaic" the requirement that they tithe a tenth of their income to God. They claim that as Christians, they are not under the Mosaic law, and so they are not under the Mosaic obligation to pay tithes. But the New Testament does not ground the tithe on the Mosaic law. On the contrary, Hebrews 7 establishes the authority of Jesus Christ's high priestly office in terms of Melchizedek's collection of the tithe from Abraham. The superiority of the New Covenant to the Old Covenant is seen in Abraham's payment of his tithe to Melchizedek - a representative judicial act of submission in the name of Israel and his son Levi. Any attempt to escape the obligation of the tithe is an assault on the New Covenant's High Priest, Jesus Christ.

The Authority of the Institutional Church

To undercut the institutional church's source of finding is to compromise the testimony of the church as the inheritor of the Abrahamic promises. This weakens the church's authority. Anything that weakens the legitimate authority of the institutional church necessarily establishes one of the other two covenantal institutions as a rival, either the family or the State.* The authority of the institutional church to collect the tithe is the most important *economic* mark of its God-delegated sovereignty.

In the late twentieth century the assault on the institutional church comes from all sides: right and left, inside and outside. Christians have lost confidence in the church as an agency of national and international healing.[3] Some Christians have relied on a rebirth of the family to replace the visibly faltering authority of the church in our day. Others have passively-and sometimes actively - promoted the welfare State as the agency of healing. These attempts to create an alternative to the church will fail. The family is not the central institution of Christian society; the church is. The family will not extend into eternity (Matt. 22:30); the church will (Rev. 21:1-2). Meanwhile, the State has become an agency of plunder To rely on it to bring social peace is the grand illusion of our age -an illusion that is fading fast, but no widely acceptable replacement is yet in sight. That replacement is under our noses: the church of Jesus Christ.

This section of the book deals with the sovereignty, authority, and present-day weakness of the institutional church. This weakness is manifested in the inability of churches to collect the tithes that its members owe to God through the local churches. I have focused on the tithe as a visible mark of men's attitudes

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2. I capitalize State to distinguish it from the regional civil jurisdiction in the United States known as the state, e.g., California, Arizona, Michigan, etc.

3. Gary North, *Healer of the* Nations: *Biblical Blueprints for International Relations* (Ft. Worth, Texas Dominion Press, 1987).

toward the church. I begin as Jesus did in several of His parables: with men's pocketbooks, which they understand far better than they understand theology or social theory.

As far as the Bible reveals, the tithe began with Abraham's payment to Melchizedek, the priest of Salem (peace). The tithe is an aspect of point two of the biblical covenant model: hierarchy-authority-representation: The tithe is owed to God through a representative agency the institutional church. The sacraments are an aspect of point four: oath-sanctions.[5] They are dispensed by this same agency. Tithing is unbreakable connected to the institutional church because the sacraments are unbreakable connected to the institutional church. This is why I have titled this book, *Tithing and the Church.*

Part 1 is divided into five chapters. They parallel the five points of the biblical covenant model. The structure of Part 1 is: church sovereignty, church authority, church membership standards (boundaries), monetary sanctions, and the war over inheritance - church vs. State.

Any attack on the God-delegated authority of the institutional church to collect the tithe is an attack on the God-delegated monopoly source of the sacraments in history. Taking the sacraments in a local church without paying a tithe to that church is a form of theft. Any refusal to take the sacraments because you are unwilling to pay your tithe to a local church is a form of excommunication: *self-excommunication.* To create your own home-made church as a means of giving yourself the sacraments while paying yourself the tithe is not only self-excommunication, it is theft as well. A word to the wise is sufficient.

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4. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant* (2nd cd.; Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1992), ch. 2.

5. *Ibid.,* Ch. 4.

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SOVEREIGNTY AND THE TITHE

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine *house, and prove me now herewith, saith the* LORD *of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out* a *blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it (Mal. 3:10).*

One storehouse, one tithe: this is the heart of the matter. The day that covenant-keeping men multiply storehouses for God's tithe is the day they begin to lose the blessings of God in history. Why? Because the existence of many storehouses reveals that men no longer believe that there is a single, sovereign, God-authorized collector of the tithe: the institutional church. Their tithes are broken up into a series of offerings; then these offerings are perceived as morally voluntary then this moral voluntarism transfers visible sovereignty to the donor: *he who pays the piper calls the tune.*

The sovereignty of the donor over his tithe is an illusion. This form of sovereignty cannot remain with the individual. Individuals possess delegated sovereignty but they cannot retain it if they rebel against the ultimate Sovereign, God. They refuse to tithe; then the State's tax collector steps in and imposes compulsion. The State increasingly calls the tunes.

Voluntarism vs. Sovereignty

The modern church is consistent. It does not preach its own lawful delegated sovereignty because it does not preach the absolute sovereignty of God. It does not preach the economic mark of this delegated sovereignty - the morally mandatory tithe - because it does not preach the morally mandatory law of God. By dismissing three-quarters of the Bible as "God's Word, emeritus," the church has cut its own purse strings.

When the church teaches that God has no legal claims on modern man's institutions - pluralism[1] - it places itself under another god with another law. God is presented as if He had no legal claims on modern man. "God loves you, and has a wonderful plan for your life" has been substituted for "God claims you, and has placed you under an eternal bond, which you have broken." The doctrine of a claims-less God has financial consequences for the churches, just as it does for the people in them who refuse to pay wallets *with holes.*

> Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste? Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes (Hag. 1:3-6).

This warning is easily dismissed today as "Old Testament stuff." Non-judicial preaching has presented the church as a strictly voluntary institution, contractual rather than covenantal: just one more voluntary institution among many. Such preaching regards the communion table as it regards biblical law: an occasional ritual for remembrance's sake only. The church is

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1. Gary North, *Political Polytheism: The Myth of Pluralism* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989).

barely distinguished theologically from a non-profit social club. It is not perceived as sovereign.

There is very little sense of the judicial presence of God anywhere in modern church liturgy. Men may sing, "All hail the power of Jesus' name; let angels prostrate fall," but neither angels nor the power of Jesus' name are taken seriously. In liberal churches, such realities are seen, at best, as non-historical (Barthianism); at worst, as mythical (Bultmanism).

The institutional church manifests God's moral and judicial standard for the world,[2] just as Israel manifested His standard under the Mosaic covenant. This, too, is not believed by the modern church. We find that there is no sense of the judicial presence of God in the civil courtroom, the voting booth, and on inauguration day. The following phrases are mere formalities: "So help me, God" (courtroom oath), "In God we trust" (slogan on U.S. money), and "God bless you all" (tagged onto the end of televised speeches by American Presidents). Invoking God's name has become a mere convention.

The Judicial Marks of Sovereignty: Oath and Sanctions

The presence of a self-valedictory oath is the judicial mark of covenantal sovereignty. Only three institutions lawfully can require such an oath: church, State, and family.[3] Such an oath implicitly or explicitly calls down God's negative sanctions on the person who breaks the conditions of the oath. These sanctions are historical, although few Christians believe this, despite Paul's warning regarding the misuse of the church covenant's oath-renewal ceremony the Lord's Supper.

> Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup

2. Gary North, *Healer of the Nations: Biblical Blueprints for International Relations* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987), Introduction.

3. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant* (2nd cd.; Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1992), ch. 4.

> of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world (1 Cor. 11:27-32).

Self-judgment, institutional judgment, and God's judgment: all take place in history. But the modern church has doubts about God's predictable sanctions in history. Most Christians do not expect to experience God's positive covenantal sanctions in history. The next step is obvious: to lose faith in meaningful historical progress. Here is the origin of pessimillennialism's lack of confidence in the work of the church, the effects of the gospel, and the future of Christianity}

Without the oath and its associated sanctions, the church is not legally distinguishable from any other oatMess, voluntary institution. This skepticism regarding the church's lawfully delegated sovereignty has spread to another covenantal, oath-bound institution: *the family.* Today, the oath that creates a new family is undermined by a judicial monstrosity no-fault divorce. Only one oath-bound institution is still taken seriously, because of the sanctions attached to the oath: the State. The rise of modern statism has been accompanied by a decline of the institutional church and a decline of the family.

Which oath does God understand as central in society? The church's oath. Why? Because only the church survives the final judgment. It alone extends into eternity (Rev. 21:1-2). Only the church has been assigned the task of baptizing whole nations in Christ's name (Matt. 28:18-20). Baptism is a church monopoly

4. Gary North, *Millennialism and Social Theory* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990), chaps. 3, 4, 7, 8, 9.

Today, this view of the centrality of the church and its sacraments is not widely shared. Liberals affirm the centrality of the State. Conservatives affirm the centrality of the family. Both views are at war against the plain teaching of Jesus.

> And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows. Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and tbe daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me (Matt. 10:28-37).

Family Values and God's Sanctions

"Family values." Everywhere we turn, we hear American conservatives proclaiming family values. Fund-raising mailing list empires have been built on family values. Politicians are supposed to profess family values, and all of them do.

But a question arises: *Which kind* of family values? How about Islam's family values? How about defending chastity the Islamic way? The family gets together and executes the unmarried daughter after she has delivered the baby. Not the right approach? But these are surely family values, Are you against family values?[5]

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5. In November, 1993, a new movie was released: *Addams Family Values.* The

We are all for family values. No doubt about it. Show me the politician who stands up and says: "Basically, I'm all for adultery and abortion." Not many right? But how do they vote? How do they live their lives? As people who are unafraid of God's negative sanctions in history. And why shouldn't they be unafraid? The modern church teaches that there are no covenantally predictable corporate sanctions in history.[6]

Christians have accepted this equation: *original sin* minus God's *historical sanctions* plus God's *common* grace = legitimate civil jurisprudence. All the weeping and wailing and direct-mail solicitations concerning the breakdown of family values will change nothing until Christians at last admit that their view of God's historical sanctions is essentially the same as covenant-breaking, late-twentieth-century humanist man's. The argument is over the degree to which the State's negative sanctions should be allowed by modern democracies to deviate from the Old Testament's negative sanctions. Modem man has decided: there should be very few overlapping sanctions. No-fault divorce, no-fault abortion, and no-fault adultery are basic tenets of belief on Wall Street, Main Street, and Capitol Hill: (1) "If it feels good, do it." (2) "If it leads to morning sickness, kill it."

Then there are the economic considerations: (1) "If it ever gets born, someone must pay for it." (2) "If the parent can't pay for it, the government will." Therefore, "Balance the family budget: kill the unborn" soon becomes: "Balance the government's budget: kill the unborn."

The covenant-breaking State and the covenant-breaking family are common allies against the church whenever the church preaches God's law. But the church no longer preaches God's law. So, the covenant-breaking State and the covenant-breaking family assume that society can safely ignore the covenant-ignoring church. Everyone ignores God's warning:

Addams family is a comedy family of bizarre sadists and masochists.

6. North, *Millennialism and Social Theory*, ch. 7.

> Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5: 19).

He Who Holds the Hammer

Neither the morally mandatory tithe nor God's negative sanctions in history: here is the message of the modern evangelical church. No *mandatory tithe, reduced positive sanctions in history: this* conclusion is the result of such preaching. Because the church will not impose negative sanctions against members who **refuse** to tithe - the loss of voting membership' -it finds itself less capable of bringing a crucial positive sanction in society charity. The local church buys a debt-encumbered piece of land, builds a **debt-**encumbered building, and pays a debt-encumbered pastor. The moment it pays off one building, it builds another. Fund-raising in American evangelical churches today is heavily dependent on **building** programs. Modern churches have an **edifice** complex. What most do not have are charitable ministries.

There is a legitimate division of labor in society. There are many things that the church cannot do well - running a Christian school, grades K-12, comes to mind, or running a crisis pregnancy center, or running a drug-rehabilitation center (a basic need in any society where the State runs the schools). The church should support Christian agencies that can do these things well. These agencies, to the extent that they are dependent on the money provided by the churches, **will** then reflect the standards of the churches. Why? Because of the fear of negative sanctions: the churches' **refusal** to write more checks.

Churches today write checks mainly to bankers. The bankers have the negative sanction: no *payment, no church building.* They, not the churches, "hold the hammer." Then the local government finds that it can disrupt the flow of finds by revoking a

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7. See Chapter 3.

church's property tax exemption. There are now two hammers. Then the Federal government threatens to revoke a church's tax-exempt status. There are now three hammers.

Where is the churches' hammer? In heaven. But churches insist that God does not bring predictable negative sanctions in history. His hammer is exclusively post-historical, they preach. In short, the church offers no threat of a hammer in the modern world, which does not acknowledge God or eternity. Or, as a pair of famous political theorists have put it:

> And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go (Ex. 5:2).

> Now if ye be-ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the comet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands? (Dan. 3:15).

He who holds the largest hummer gets paid first. The church preaches that it holds no earthly hammer at all. The church therefore gets the leftovers: after personal and family taxes; after personal and family debt payments; and after food, clothing, college expenses, and entertainment,

If Not Tithes, Then Offerings

The church, burdened with debt, denying its possession of meaningful sanctions, comes to its members and pleads: "Do what the Spirit leads you to do." But what the Spirit apparently leads them to do is less - far, far less - than He required from God's Old Covenant people. There is no denomination in the United States that collects anything approaching half a tithe from its members.

Old Covenant people were spiritual children, we are assured. This is why God gave them so many laws. He told them exactly what not to do. But we are adults. No one tells us what to do or not to do (not counting the State, of course). We must respond as adults do. We must sacrifice. That we sacrifice economically at less than half of the required rate of sacrifice of Old Covenant children is of course beside the point. After all, they were a rural, tribal people. We are urban globalists, about to enter a stupendous New World Order. Should we expect the laws of such a primitive people to serve us well today? Of course not. We're all adults here. Taxpaying adults. The church deserves ten percent of our income? Primitive! Childish!

What should we give the local church? Not tithes and offerings, surely. Just offerings. The size of these offerings is exclusively our decision. So is the recipient. Sovereignty belongs to us. *We the people* impose the sanctions around here (not counting the State, of course). We the people giveth, and we also taketh away. Blessed be the name of the people. We administer the oath. *We baptize the church.* Shape up, church!

So, the church's officers come before the people mainly as representatives of the people. They beg in the name of God, but collect in the name of the people. They are then sent back to God, offerings in hand. There is hierarchy here: the people tell the church, as God's agent, what they are willing to pay.

Modern Christians comebefore God and remind Him: "Not a cent more, mind You! You should be grateful for whatever You get. Don't pull any of that fire and brimstone rhetoric on us! That's Old Testament stuff. We don't take kindly to it. We can walk across the street and join another church, You know. It needs our money. It will be glad to get us. This is a buyers' market, Old Fellow. We can shop around. This is a free market system. We're price sensitive. We'll take the best package deal offered by one of Your churches. There are so few of us these days. It's a declining market. This makes us valued customers."

(People ask me: What does it matter which eschatology a

person holds? I will tell you. Postmillennialist are not persuaded that the present "down market" in the number of converts is permanent; pessimiJlennialists are persuaded. This means that their eschatology reinforces "buyers' market" mentality. It also affects their churches' discipline: gutting it.)

There was a time, three centuries ago, when Christians believed that there are only three ways out of the church: death, excommunication, and letter of transfer They no longer do. Excommunication is old fashioned. Letters of transfer only carry weight when receiving churches sanction them, rejecting the visitors' request for membership, if only for the sake of creating respect for their own letters of transfer But in a buyers' market for voluntary donations, churches are rarely choosy. They have become beggars. Beggars *can't be choosers.*

Conclusion

The churches no longer hold the hammer. They dropped it over a century ago. Why? Because they applied the philosophy of *nominalism* to the church itself: a world of contracts, not binding covenants under God. When Holy Communion became in most Protestants' thinking a mere memorial, the church covenant became a contract in their thinking.

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is no longer taken seriously. While the following development may not be predictable in every instance, it is familiar enough to be considered highly probable. When weekly communion goes to monthly communion, and monthly communion goes to quarterly communion, and grape juice is substituted for wine, tithes become offerings. Nominalism undermines tithing because nominalism undermines men's fear of church sanctions: faith in God's predictable covenantal sanctions in history whenever church and State fail to enforce His law by means of the law's mandated sanctions.

When the churches stopped preaching the mandatory tithe, the State adapted the idea and multiplied by four: taxes.

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AUTHORITY AND THE TITHE

Moreover he [Hezekiah] commanded the people that dwelt in Jerusalem to give the portion of the priests and the Levites, that they might be encouraged in the law of the LORD *(II Chron. 31:4).*

Hezekiah understood at least two things about the tithe. First, as king, he possessed the God-delegated authority to command Israelites to pay their tithes. Second, the Levites and priests had the God-delegated authority to collect these tithes. *There was not* a trace *of* "moral *voluntarism"* anywhere in *the* arrangement. The tithe in Israel was morally mandatory

Was the tithe also legally mandatory? That is, did church and State possess the authority to impose negative sanctions against those who refused to tithe? The Mosaic law does not list any. The history of Israel does not provide cases where such sanctions were imposed. My conclusion is that the command to tithe that was issued either by priest or king was moral and **exemplary** rather than judicial.

The context also makes it clear that under the Mosaic Covenant, when covenant-keepers paid their tithes, God brought great wealth to them in a unique fashion (w. 5-10). There is no biblical reason to believe that this system of corporate sanctions has changed in the New Covenant. Building wealth begins with

tithing, and not just tithing as such - the whole tithe delivered to the local church: a single storehouse (Mal. 3:10). Respect for God requires respect for God's institutional church. This means that we must pay our tithes to the local church as a duty.

Without access to a growing quantity of economic resources, Christians will not be able to extend God's dominion. If a person cannot afford to buy or lease the tools of production, he will remain a salaried worker in someone else's enterprise. He will remain, economically speaking, a second-class citizen. So, subordination to the institutional church, manifested by the payment of the tithe, brings the economic means of dominion. *He who is subordinate to God reigns in history.* This is a basic principle of biblical hierarchy: point two of the biblical covenant.[1]

Tithing and Dominion

There was a time, over three centuries ago, when the Puritan merchants of London exercised national influence far out of proportion to their small numbers. They were the English capitalists of the seventeenth century. They were also the source of almost half of the charitable giving of the nation. This gave them considerable political influence. Cromwell's militarily successful revolution against the crown added to their influence, 1650-1660, but they had not gained this influence militarily; they had gained it economically and charitably, beginning in the late sixteenth century.[2]

In this century, the State has replaced private charity as the primary source of money and support for the peon The State is perceived as the primary agency of healing. For as long as its money holds out - and still buys something - the State will continue to be regarded as the healer of the nation. But this

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L Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant* (2nd cd.; Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1992), ch. 2.

2. W. K. Jordan has discussed the influence of Puritan businessmen in his book, *Philanthropy* in *England, 1480-1660 (Russell* Sage Foundation, 1959).

ability to heal rests on political coercion and bureaucratic control. The State is now reaching the limits of its ability to confiscate the wealth of nations, all over the world. If its ability to exercise dominion by creating dependence by means of continual grants of money is ever interrupted by economic or other social disruptions, there will be a temporary void in society. That void will be filled by something. *Authority flows to those who exercise responsibility.* Who will that be?

Who should it be? Christians. But Christians are ill-prepared today to exercise such responsibility They are themselves dependents on the State. They, too, send their children to public schools, collect Social Security checks, and plan their lives on the assumption that the State will serve as an economic safety net. The State's wealth-redistribution system has steadily eliminated competition from private charitable and educational associations. When the State's safety net breaks, as it surely will, most Christians will find themselves as economically unprepared as everyone else. They have been taught to trust that which is inherently untrustworthy the modern messianic State. When this trust is finally betrayed, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth in churches, Christian college classrooms, and other supposedly sanctified places.

In that day, there will be a shift in local and national leadership, as surely as there was during the Great Depression of the 1930's. Regarding this coming shift in leadership, the question today is: Who will inherit authority? The answer is: those who bear the greatest economic responsibility in the reconstruction of the economy.

Will this be the church? If not, why not? If not, then who?

Redemption: Definitive, Yet Progressive

The basis of biblical dominion in history is the redemption of the world. To redeem something is to buy it back. This process of long-term repurchase began at Calvary.

At Calvary, Jesus paid God the full redemption price. He did

not pay it to Satan. Satan had occupied the world only as a squatter occupies it: until the owner comes to evict him. When Adarn fell, he lost title to everything, including his own life. God, by grace, granted Adam an extension of his temporal life. But by having subordinated himself covenantally to Satan through his act of rebellion, Adam had brought whatever God had 'granted to him under the temporary domain of Satan.

Satan did not gain lawful title over the earth, since Adam had forfeited this title back to God. Satan has gained administrative *control* for as long as Adam's heirs remain alive and also remain under Satan's covenantal authority. Satan would have lost this administrative control had God executed Adam in the garden, for Satan's legal claim was dependent on Adam's legal claim. Adam's claim was null and void except through God's common grace in history life, knowledge, time, authority over nature, and capital.[3]

Jesus *definitively* paid God the full redemption price. This does not authorize His heirs the right to collect immediately on their inheritance. The world-redemption process is a process. It is *progressive,* although grounded legally in Jesus Christ's definitive act of redemption. In this sense, world redemption mirrors personal sanctification. At the moment of his redemption in history, the redeemed person receives by God's judicial declaration the moral perfection of Christ's perfect humanity. But this moral perfection, while definitive and judicially complete, must be developed overtime. Sanctification is progressive: a working out in history of the moral perfection of Christ.[4] This is why Paul wrote of the Christian way of life as a race with a prize at the end:

Kuow ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one

3. Gary North, *Dominion* and *Common* Grace: *The Biblical Bask of Progress (Tyler,* Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987), ch. 1.

4. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory* (3rd cd.; Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1988), pp. 66-72.

receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway (I Cor. 9:24-27).

I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you (Phil. 3:14-15).

The Greatest Commission System Structure

God has given to the Church a Great Commission: "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matt. 28:18-20). This commission is well known among Christians. What is not recognized is the commission system by which the Great Commission is carried out.

When a company establishes a commission payment system to reward its sales force, it designs it so that the individual salesman has a financial incentive to stay on the road or the phone for long hours. He is expected to develop continually his powers of persuasion so as to produce more revenue for the company per contact. The higher the commission, the greater the incentive. The higher the commission, the more qualified the salesmen who will be attracted to join the sales force.

The company must balance the rewards offered to salesmen with the rewards offered to other members of the operation: salaried personnel, investors, bankers, and suppliers. But to maximize the number of sales, there is no doubt that a large

commission paid to salesmen is the great motivator. Some companies may pay as much as 20 percent of gross revenues to the sales force.

God, the owner of the whole earth, has established the most generous commission structure in history 90 percent after expenses is retained by the sales force. Any business that would offer its sales force 90 percent after expenses would attract the most competent salesmen on earth. The firm would be flooded with applicants for any sales position that might open up. This is what God offers to His people. They keep 90 percent; His church receives ten percent; the State is entitled to no more than ten percent (I Sam. 8:15, 17). But men rebel. They think this tithe burden is too onerous. They have been deceived.

The Con Artist

Satan appears on the scene and makes a more attractive offer: "Keep it all!" He can afford to make this offer: *he does not own the company.* He is like the con artist who walks into a temporarily empty office and signs up salesmen as if he were the president of the company He makes his money on the back end of the transaction when he sends his goons to collect payments from the salesmen.

The salesmen have kept all the money from their efforts. The goons then make the salesmen an offer they cannot refuse. The Mafia calls these goons "enforcers." Civil government calls them "revenue agents." Their purpose in each case is the same: to extract far more than ten percent of net earnings from the naive but now-trapped salesmen. He who refuses to pay faces unpleasant consequences: broken bones or a bulletin the head (Mafia); fines, tax liens, or jail sentences (civil government).

The victims went into the deal thinking they could get something for nothing. They firmly believed that someone would gladly provide them with productive capital and also allow them to keep everything they earned from their own labor. Any wise man would have spotted the offer as fraudulent as soon as

he heard it. But there are not many wise men in history, at least not so far. Wide is the gate that beckons the unwise, and they eagerly 'rush through it.

So, Satan comes to men with a proposition: "Keep everything you earn. I have no legal claim on your wealth." The second statement is true; he has no legal claim on anything. The first statement involves making a verbal promise to transfer to man God's lawful share in the business. Satan is not in a position to deliver on this promise, but billions of people believe he is. They believe that God has no legal claim on them. They also believe that God has no economic claim on them. They are incorrect on both points. They will learn this on judgment day. In the meantime, they bear the economic and civil consequences of having believed a lie. They pay dearly.

The Wealth of My Hand!

Men are not content with God's grant of 90 percent after business expenses. They see this as an **infringement** on their property They want to keep all of it. They have not heeded God's warning to the Israelites of the generation of the conquest of Canaan:

> And thou say in **thine** heart, My power and the might of mine hand bath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant **which** he sware **unto** thy fathers, as it is this day **(Deut. 8:17-18).**

Men resent God's demand that they pay Him ten percent. They do not see themselves as working on commission. They see themselves as sole owners of the company They think the tools of production are the product of their own hands: a **combination** of land and labor over time. Men insist on keeping all of the appropriate payments to each of these factors of production: rents, wages, and interest. Educated men today are asked

to believe that land and labor arrived by way of eons of cosmic evolution. Many of them do believe this. They do not see themselves as indebted to God. They do not see themselves as God's sharecroppers. So, they look at the 90-10 arrangement and do not conclude: "The greatest commission structure in history!" Instead, they conclude: "God is trying to get into my wallet."

Who Lawfully Collects the Tithe?

The civil magistrate collects taxes. Paul identifies him as God's minister (Rem. 13:4). He is collecting taxes in God's name, whether he names God or not. God has ordained him. He is a subordinate to God. In his capacity as the representative of God to men through the State, he lawfully collects taxes. Men complain about today's level of taxation, as well they should - it constitutes tyranny (I Sam. 8:15, 17) - but they rarely rebel. They do not blame God. They accept their burden as members of a democratic political order. They fully understand that they do not possess the authority as individuals to determine where their tax money should go. They dutifully pay the tax collector.

Then who lawfully collects the tithe? The minister of God. But this minister is not a civil officer; he is an ecclesiastical officer. He comes as God's designated, ordained agent and insists on payment. That is, he should do this. In fact, he is too timid to do this in our day. Why? Because he has adopted -or at least acceded to - a modified view of Satan's offer: "Pay whatever seems fair to you. God has no legal claim on ten percent after business expenses."

This outlook transfers authority over the distribution of the tithe to the tithe-payer. This transfer of authority is illegitimate for two reasons. First, the giver defines the tithe's percentage as he sees fit, but somehow this figure is usually less than ten percent. Second, he reserves to himself the authority to distribute this tithe to those organizations that he approves of. This violates God's system of hierarchical authority. The tithe-payer

assumes that not only does God *not* have a legal claim to a full ten percent, God has not identified any single organization as the sovereign agent of collection and distribution. *This leaves the tither* in *control over who should receive his tithe -an* unlawful transfer of authority to the autonomous individual.[5]

A Hole in the Wallet

Covenant-breaking man affirms his self-professed autonomy by controlling his wallet. His control over the allocation of his money is the number-one manifestation of his faith.

Money is the most marketable commodity economist Ludwig von Mises argued.[6] *This means that money is the most representative form of wealth.* This is why Jesus warned that men cannot serve two gods, God and mammon (Matt. 6:24). This is why Paul warned that the love of money is the root of all evil (I Tim. 6:10). What a man does with his money reveals his priorities.

Covenant-breaking man's number-one priority is to affirm his own autonomy without coming under God's judgment in both history and eternity. He believes that he has the right to decide what to do with his money. God tells him he is wrong about this. God has first claim through His institutional church. Men in their rebellion do not accept this teaching. They would prefer to keep 100 percent of a shrinking economic base, which is what God promises they will eventually experience.

It is not surprising that we find Christians who deny that Haggai's prophetic warning (Hag. 1:3-11) is still valid under the New Covenant. *Christians still seek to affirm theologies that defend man's partial autonomy before God.* Anyone who affirms the mandatory tithe has to this extent broken with the covenant-breaking philosophies of his era. Christians are still so impressed with covenant-breaking philosophies of human autonomy that they

5. See Part 2, below.

6. Ludwig von Mises, *The Theory of Money and Credit* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, [1912] 1953), pp. 32-33.

have not obeyed God in this area. They cling to their wallets as tightly as the Israelites of Haggai's day clung to theirs.

But they have nevertheless felt guilty about this. They have therefore sought to justify themselves theologically. In doing so, they have abandoned the tool of dominion: God's law.[7]

To Escape the Obligation

There are many ways that Christian theologians have sought to escape the cause-and-effect relationship between tithing and wealth described by Malachi. One way is to apply to the theology of tithing Meredith G. Kline's theory of cause and effect in the New Covenant era. Kline denies that in the New Covenant era there is any predictable relationship between covenantal law and economic sanctions.

> And meanwhile it [the common grace order] must run its course within the uncertainties of the mutually conditioning principles of common grace and common curse, prosperity and adversity being experienced in a manner largely unpredictable because of the inscrutable sovereignty of the divine will that dispenses them in mysterious ways.[8]

Kline self-consciously has abandoned the Mosaic Covenant's doctrine of covenantal predictability in history. He has substituted a theory of God's common-grace inscrutability to mankind in New Covenant history. Social cause and effect become mysterious from the point of view of biblical revelation. This theology of mystery if true, would make biblical social theory impossible. Christians would then be forced to seek for reliable social theory - assuming that such a theory even exists -in the

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7. Gary North, *Tools of Dominion: The Case Laws of Exodus* (Tyler, Texas Institute for Christian Economics, 1990).

8. Meredith G. Kline, "Comments on the Old-New Error," *Westminster Theological Journal*, XLI (Fait 1978), p. 184.

writings and speculations of covenant-breakers.[9] This is exactly what Christians have been doing from the days that Christian apologists began to appeal to Greek philosophy as the foundation of common-ground truths. It is this quest for common-ground principles of reasoning that Cornelius Van Til rejected as a compromise with the devil.[10]

Another way to deny the moral necessity of tithing is to declare, with fundamentalism, "We're under grace, not law!" The result of such a universal affirmation is the self-conscious surrender of history to covenant-breakers. Christians then find themselves under pagan laws and pagan lawyers.[11]

A third way is to affirm that God's Holy Spirit will inform each Christian how much to give. This opens the Christian to feelings of guilt, either because he thinks he has to give more than the tithe - but exactly how much? - or because he gives less and worries about it. Guilt produces doubt. Guilt and doubt are not conducive to entrepreneurship and economic growth.'*

A fourth approach is to affirm the mandatory tithe, but then deny that the institutional church has any legal claim on it. This leaves the tither in control over the allocation of his tithe. This is an affirmation of man's autonomy, but in the name of covenantal faithfulness.[13]

All four approaches deny God's warning through Malachi. All four seek to evade man's responsibility to bring one-tenth of his increase to the single storehouse, the house of God.

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9. Gary North, *Millennialism and Social Theory* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990), ch. 7.

10. Cornelius Van Til, *A Christian Theory of Knowledge* (Nutley, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1969).

11. Gary North, *Political Polytheism The Myth of* Pluralism (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989), Part 3.

12. David Chilton, *Productive Christians in an Age of Guilt-Manipulators: A Biblical Response to Ronald J. Side-r (5th* cd.; Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990).

13. See Part 2, below.

Conclusion

The leadership of Christians in society depends on their covenantal faithfulness. The leadership of individual Christians within the institutional church also depends on their covenantal faithfulness. If God still brings predictable corporate sanctions - both positive and negative - in history in terms of His law, as the Old Testament affirms repeatedly then in order for men to prosper, they must obey God's Bible-revealed laws. *The failure of Christians to exercise dominion in any era of history is closely associated with their unwillingness to preach God's law and obey it.* To put it concretely it is associated with their unwillingness to bring all of their tithes to God's single storehouse: the local church.

It is unlikely that individual Christians will be able to exercise leadership outside of the institutional churches if Christians remain economically second-class citizens, struggling to keep up economically with covenant-breakers. It is time for pastors to start preaching the biblically mandatory nature of the tithe if they want the church to lead in society. Unfortunately not many pastors really want this added responsibility for themselves and their congregations. So, they continue to nag members for "donations." But unlike the State's appeal for larger "contributions,"[14] churches threaten no negative sanctions against members who refuse to donate. *Preaching apart from* institutional *sanctions becomes either nagging or cheerleading.* The Bible does not set forth a leadership program through either approach.

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14. In the U.S., the compulsory tax (FICA) on salaries that is used to pay those people who receive Federal pensions (Social Security benefits) is called a contribution.

3

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP AND THE TITHE

And that we should bring the firstfruits of our dough, and OUT *offerings,* and *the fruit of* all *manner of trees, of wine* and *of oil, unto the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God; and the tithes of our ground unto the Levites, that the* same *Levites might have the tithes in all the cities of* OUT *tillage. And the priest the son of* Aaron skull *be with the Levites, when the Levites take tithes:* and *the Levites shall bring up the tithe of the tithes unto the house of our God, to the chambers, into the treasure house. For the children of Israel and the children of Levi shall bring the offering of the corn, of the new wine, and the oil, unto the chambers, where are the vessels of the sanctuary,* and *the priests that minister,* and *the porters, and the singers: and we will not forsake the house of our God (Neh. 10:37-39).*

After their return from the Babylonian captivity, the Israelites vowed not to forsake the house of the Lord. To show that they were serious about this vow, they first brought their tithes to the Levites, as the Mosaic law required: "But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as an heave offering unto the LoRD, I have given to the Levites to inherit: therefore I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance" (Num. 18:24). The Levites' God-assigned task was to guard the temple's boundaries (Num. 18:1-22).

Because so few people take seriously the authority of the

modern "democratic" church in the United States, including most church members, there has seemed to be no pressing need to reconsider church membership - the legal issue of boundaries.[1] Few Christians feel any necessity to obey church discipline. There is always another church down the street to join if anyone should get into legal trouble with his church. Because there is so little to gain by controlling a local evangelical church today, it is relatively inexpensive for a church to police its boundaries. Elders today guard what is regarded as a nearly empty treasure chest, a pearl of heavily discounted price.

Nevertheless, very loose standards of church membership in most evangelical congregations and in many denominational churches make local congregations vulnerable to subversion and capture. The success of theological liberals in capturing the mainline denominations in the United States and everywhere else, 1870-1960, testifies to just how vulnerable the churches were. The liberals went after seminaries and denominational colleges initially, but they were also successful in capturing the minds and wallets of laymen. They could never have captured the churches with only a top-down strategy of subversion. I am convinced that the standards for church membership in the modern democratic church guaranteed the liberals' success. After 1960, even the Roman Catholics capitulated;

Protestant churches have at least one thing in common: they do not enforce the tithe as a condition of *voting* membership. They extend voting membership to men who do not profess allegiance to the universal creeds of the historic church and also to traditional confessions. I believe that this common feature of

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1. Gary North, *Boundaries and Dominion: Ths Economics of Leviticus* (Tyler, Texas Institute for Christian Economics, 1994).

2. Hans Küng, *The Council Reform and Reunion* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1961); *A* New Catechism: Catholic *Faith for Adults (New* York: Herder and Herder, 1967) ; Joaquin Sáenz y Arriaga, *The New Post-Conciliar or Montinian Church (La* Habra, California: Edgar A. Lucidi, 1985); Malachi Martin, *TheJesuits: The Society of Jesus and the Betray-d of the Roman CatholicChurch (New* York Simon & Schuster, 1987).

modern church government is the "soft underbelly" of the evangelical churches. They" have extended the franchise to those who are not required to affirm, support, and defend the faith once delivered to the saints.

How I Could Steal Your Church

Let us assume, just for the sake of argument, that your church is worth capturing. Maybe it owns some valuable property that I could sell at a profit to real estate developers. For whatever reason, I have decided to obtain your property no money down, simply by taking over your monthly mortgage payments. Here is my two-year plan to get what I want.

First, I know what your church wants: new members. A large and growing congregation is always seen as an asset. So I make a deal with members of some cooperating group. They will slowly and inconspicuously join your church. If your church gives altar calls, they will march down the aisle. If you want them to be baptized (or rebaptized), they will agree immediately. Week by week, you will experience an "evangelism explosion." You will be astounded at how "the Holy Ghost is working to build your church's ministry." And since you baptize them and allow them to take communion, you will no doubt allow them to vote. Therein lies a tale - a tale of discount property

Eventually you will call a congregational meeting. When I have made certain that my people control at least 50.1% of the votes in your church, I will instruct them to begin electing new deacons, elders, and trustee members. Maybe we can do it in one evening; maybe we will bide our time. But election by election, my people will gain the positions of authority in your church if your church is democratic. (Roman Catholics do not need to fear; neither do Episcopalians and Methodists: bishops guard church property if nothing else.)

There will come a day when my people will decide to sell the church property Or if we want the church property without a formal transfer of title, the day will come when my people will

vote to leave your denomination and join one that I control. The paperwork is not all that important. One way or another, we will be able to take away everything you and your members have struggled to build up over a lifetime. *If* you allow *all* baptized communing members to vote, *you have in effect already turned over title to your property to my group.* We can take legal possession any time I can round up enough conniving people to outvote your members by 50.1% to 49.9%. So can some local Masonic Lodge, Unitarian Church, Moonie Congregation, or Church of Cosmic Vibrations. Am I wrong? Check your church's by-laws.

Legally, there is nothing you could do to protect yourself, unless you changed your by-laws before the invaders got their majority. But would you see the threat in time? Any church in a college town could be lost to a bunch of students within a few months. Wouldn't most congregations simply rejoice at "all those nice young people who are being led to Jesus"? Christians are notoriously naive concerning anything political. Nevertheless, the legal process for controlling churches is overwhelmingly political. This was not the case under the Mosaic economy.

Judicial Boundaries in the Mosaic Economy

There were no immigration restrictions in ancient Israel, despite the threat of alien religions in Israel. Ancient Israel was not a pure democracy. It was not a welfare State. To exercise political or judicial authority in Israel, a person had to be in covenant with the God of Israel. The law set forth religious requirements that restricted easy access to such judicial authority by aliens: Edomites and Egyptians could not become full members of the congregation (civil order) until the third generation; Moabites and Ammonites could not enter until the tenth generation (Deut. 23:3-8).

God's law assumed that there would be strangers in the land. Again and again, the law of God warned the Israelites not to mistreat widows, fatherless children, and strangers. The Israelites had been strangers in Egypt and had been mistreated; they

were not supposed to mistreat strangers in their land.

Why would strangers come to Israel? For many reasons: trade, better working conditions, greater judicial protection, greater safety from marauders, and all the positive benefits promised by God to Israel in Deuteronomy 28:1-14. Why not take advantage of better external conditions? So confident was God in His own covenantal promises of blessing that His law established guidelines for dealing with the strangers He knew would come to Israel in search of a better life. His blessings were not limited to internal feelings experienced only by covenant-keepers. External blessings were available to anyone living in His covenanted land during those periods in which His people remained faithful to Him and to His law.

The Mosaic law established two forms of church membership for circumcised people: communing membership (lawful access to the Passover) and priestly membership (the Levites). All circumcised males and their families could come to the Passover (Ex. 12:48). They would hear the law in the various teaching services, including the seventh-year service in which the whole of the law was read to every resident in Israel at the feast of tabernacles (Deut. 31:9-12).

The administration of the sacrament of Passover and the other feasts and sacrifices was a monopoly office of one tribe, the Levites. Other Israelites and even circumcised resident aliens could be adopted into this tribe at the discretion of a Levite family and by the payment of a substantial entry fee (Lev. 27:2-8).[3] They could become priests in this way. But this was not an easy thing to accomplish. In most cases, only those who had been born into the family of Levi ever served as officers of the assembly. A tribal boundary was the crucial judicial boundary that protected the Mosaic priesthood.

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3. North, *Boundaries and Dominion,* ch. 36.

Citizenship Was Restricted

The law of God recognized in the era of the Mosaic Covenant that spiritual maturity takes time. Ethical rebellion can be so great in a culture that it takes several generations of adherence to God's revealed law to train up a generation of law-abiding people. Until the newcomers' ethical, and theological baggage brought from their homelands was removed from their lives, they were not allowed to participate in the execution of God's judgment. They had to prove themselves first.

God's law protected the office of civil judge from being captured by newly arrived immigrants who were willing to have themselves and their sons circumcised, but who had not learned to discipline their lives in terms of God's law. Circumcision gave them immediate access to Passover, but it did not give them immediate access to civil authority.[4]

Because immigrants could not become competitors in either the civil or ecclesiastical judicial system, they could be safely welcomed by the Israelites. God commanded the Israelites to treat them well. This was a major form of evangelism. Men from far and wide were to hear the stories of prosperity and righteousness in Israel, and they would then glorify God:

> Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who bath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? (Deut. 4:5-8).

4. Gary North, *Political Polytheism: The Myth of Pluralism* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989), ch. 2.

Democracy and Immigration

We can examine this problem of judicial access from another standpoint, the strictly political. The twentieth century has seen the creation of immigration and emigration barriers. The Communist "paradises" lined their borders with barbed wire and guards, in order to keep their citizens inside their New World Order. Other socialist "paradises" may allow people to leave, but many of them refuse to allow people to take their capital with them: cash, gold, silver, and so forth. They are allowed to leave "with the clothes on their backs," but not much more.

Similarly the democracies have created barriers to entry. Before 1914, such restrictions were rare. Today, people attempting to enter most democratic republics had better have a lot more than the clothes on their backs, or else they will be sent back to their point of exodus. Immigration barriers, quotas, and other restrictions keep out "the human flotsam and jetsam." No longer does any democracy honor the sentiments of Emma Lazarus, whose words are inscribed on the statue of liberty. "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free; the wretched refuse of your teeming shore; Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed, to me: I lift up my lamp beside the golden door." Immigrants had better be carrying American Express cards if they want to join those who have found "the good life" in some democratic land.

What made the difference? Cheaper transportation, for one thing. In the early nineteenth century, poor people who came to the United States were people from northern Europe, since those were the nations the U.S. traded with. The masses of immigrants came on board trading vessels-the great schooners that used the poorest people as ballast. The West-East trade carried large, heavy cargoes, such as timber. Coming back, they carried people. Yet even in this case, ocean voyages were time-consuming and expensive, relative to the wealth of the masses of working people. Few could afford the trip, and few would leave, unless their lives depended on it (e.g., the Irish in the

late 1840's who were escaping the potato famine) or they saw tremendous opportunities in America (e.g., skilled workers).

By the 1880's, steamships were bringing waves of immigrants from southern Europe and the Mediterranean. Economist Thomas Sowell writes: "The changeover from sailing ships to steamships was sudden and dramatic. As of 1856, 97 percent of passengers arriving in New York came on steamships. Changes in origin were almost as dramatic. Whereas more than four-fifths of all European immigrants to the United States came from northern and western Europe in 1882, by 1907 more than four-fifths were from southern and eastern Europe."5

A similar phenomenon is taking place today in every wealthy nation. The jet airplane is the primary vehicle. Voters recognize that they dare not give recent immigrants lawful access to the voting booth. The newly arrived immigrants could vote their way into the wallets of those who presently control the civil order. If mere physical presence entitles a person to the civil franchise, no one's wealth is safe in a society that believes that the State can confiscate other men's property All modern societies believe in a modified eighth commandment: "Thou shalt not steal, except by majority vote." This is why immigration barriers arrived with the massive increase in taxation during the First World War. Prior to 1914, no Western European nation issued compulsory passports to its citizens. Today, they all do. Every nation also requires foreign visitors to present their passports at the border.

Modern Christians recognize judicial issues in politics long before they recognize similar issues in the church. Having considered immigration and civil government, we now turn to immigration and church government.

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5. Thomas Sowell, The *Economics* and *Politics of Race:* An *International Perspective (New* York William Morrow, 1983), pp. 151-52. Cf. Sowell, *Ethnic America: A History (New York* Basic Books, 1981), pp. 11ff.

'Ike-Tiered Church Membership: Boundaries

The reigning philosophy of mass democracy has captured the minds of most Protestant Christians. They have structured their churches so as to avoid any criticism of being "undemocratic." The problem for non-hierarchical churches is that there is now no effective way to keep new members from exercising church authority. Unlike the Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, and other denominations where bishops are in authority and whose top-down hierarchical structures serve as barriers against institutional capture by those not approved by the bishops, independent churches and Presbyterian churches face this problem every time a visitor decides to join. Only because the local church in our day is so weak, ineffective, underfunded, and culturally impotent can it temporarily defer dealing with the problem of the "naturalized immigrant."

Sacramental Boundaries

Baptism is correctly seen as analogous to Old Testament circumcision by most churches. Baptized adults are usually granted church membership. Communion is another problem. While the Lord's Supper is vaguely understood as analogous to the Passover, very few churches really acknowledge the full extent of this Passover-communion link.

Any circumcised male could attend Passover (Ex. 12:48), but not every baptized individual is allowed to take communion in today's church. The modern church has erected a major barrier to full participation in the life of the church. Some churches require children to be a certain age before partaking in the Lord's Supper. Other churches require "confirmation" of teenagers. Still others restrict baptized adults from the Lord's Supper until they have gone through some sort of introductory theology class.

Such restrictions were not imposed on circumcised believers under the Mosaic Covenant. There was almost no way for a

circumcised believer under the Mosaic Covenant to become an officer of the ecclesiastical assembly. Only Levites could become ecclesiastical rulers. There was no threat from immigration. But in the New Covenant, access to ecclesiastical office is not restricted by birth. Access to church offices is by membership in the congregation followed by some sort of screening process: voting, formal education, or the laying on of hands by existing church officers. This means that the immigrant can become a church officer in a relatively brief period of time. The inherent democracy of the New Covenant ecclesiastical order has replaced the judicial boundaries of the Mosaic Covenant. In most of the evangelical churches, those who are allowed access to the Lord's Table are also allowed to vote. The Protestant concept of "every redeemed man a priest" has had significant consequences for church government.

This is one unstated but very important reason why virtually all church traditions that defend closed communion draw some sort of judicial distinction between baptized members and full communing members. Those churches that do not make such a distinction among adults do make it with respect to children. Churches that allow children to vote in church elections are rare, but they are all marked by an unwillingness to allow infant or young child communion. The idea of a three-year-old who possesses voting rights is too much to swallow.

Today there are first-class members and second-class members in every closed-communion congregation. The judicial dividing line is access to the Lord's Table. Not every baptized member can claim access to Holy Communion. To draw an analogy, it is as if not every circumcised Jew could claim access to Passover. But every circumcised person *could* attend Passover in Israel, and not only Jews. So, the judicial parallels between the sacraments of the Mosaic Covenant and the New Testament are not honored by modern Christianity. Because the priesthood is open to all baptized males who meet certain standards - standards that are no longer based on tribal membership -

Christians have drastically modified the Mosaic Covenant's concept of membership in the ecclesiastical assembly. The problem is immigration: restricting access to church office.

When a modern Protestant church member gains legal access to the Lord's Table, he also gains access to the franchise.[6] He can then help determine which men get elected as church officers. *He begins to exercise judicial authority.* Thus, the modern democratic church comes face to face with the problem of the recently arrived spiritual immigrant. Is this person theologically qualified to exercise sound judgment? Is the church as an institution risking its theological and judicial integrity when it opens the franchise to any and all communing members? The modern church answers *yes,* and so has devised ways to restrict access to the franchise by restricting access to the Lord's Table.

If the church is to preserve its theological integrity, then it must not allow people to vote who do not share a commitment to the church's official theology. If a person is not covenanted to the church in terms of a set of judicial standards- standards by which he may be judged, censured, and excommunicated- then what is to protect the church from being swamped by people who reject its first principles? After all, in a democracy, the majority rules. How can a church police itself to make sure that those members who can become a majority in any election do, in fact, adhere to the church's standards?

Screening: An Incapable Concept

If the church decides to screen candidates for full voting membership by means of a lengthy training program, then it faces a most unpleasant and unscriptural task: excluding these candidates from the communion table until they pass through some sort of examination system or probationary period. But if churches immediately give access to full voting membership

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6. I am not here dealing with another issue: whether women can lawfully vote in church elections.

and the Lord's Supper to every baptized member, then the threat of democracy becomes very real. Majorities rule.

The church has ignored the obvious solution to the problem of "democratic immigrants" for far too long. *What is needed is a* two-tied *church membership – membership that is not defined in terms of lawful* access *to the Lord's Supper.* Instead, access to communion should come immediately upon baptism. This preserves the judicial parallelism with circumcision and access to Passover. Full voting membership, however, should be based on a period of screening in terms of a set of theological, ethical, and judicial standards. This is the New Covenant's alternative to the Mosaic economy's tribal barrier to the priesthood.

Churches recognize this distinction with respect to the pastorate. No new member has instant access to the pulpit. The church universally accepts a form of two-tiered membership: *pastors vs. everyone else.* But the modern church does not understand that possessing the right to vote is a form of judicial authority the authority to bring judicial sanctions in God's name. *The voter holds the office of judge, in church and State.* Democracy in the church is a system of judicial order. But because churches do not recognize the judicial aspect of the franchise, they do not recognize that voting members are in fact church officers: *priests* - lower level priests, but priests nonetheless, i.e., *judicial intermediaries* between God and man. Priests in the New Covenant do not offer sacrifices, but they do exercise judgment.

Churches have creeds, either explicit or implicit. Churches screen out evil-doers. The fewer evil-doers that a church can screen out, the more evil that church will become over time. The bad leaven corrupts the good but institutionally impotent leaven. What can protect the good leaven?

Screening by Confession

A baptized member who refuses to proclaim his full intellectual acceptance of the eldership's more detailed creed or confessional standard, but affirms his willingness to be judged in

terms of it even though he does not believe all of it, should be admitted to the Lord's Table. He has made a covenant by tinning his willingness to abide by the terms of the covenant. But until he affirms that he has accepted the doctrines involved in the detailed creedal statement and disciplinary standards, he should not be given the right to vote in church elections.

This method of separating first-class members and second-class members solves several important problems. First, there is no need to establish a long delay between the time of baptism and the person's access to the Lord's Supper. He does not have to master a complex creed. Second, children as young as infants can be given communion without compromising the legitimacy of church authority. (This conclusion is not based only on considerations of church hierarchy; there are theological reasons.)[7] Third, people who want to exercise judicial authority must first declare their wholehearted support of the basis of institutional authority the creed or confession. Fourth, church officials can examine the lives of covenanted members before giving them access to the reins of power, but without feeling guilty about having to exclude these people from the Lord's Supper. Fifth, the church is protected from capture by people who do not agree with the church's first principles and who refuse to submit to church government. The sixth reason has to do with church finance: the tithe.

Screening by Tithing

Karl Marx understood that the abolition of the property qualification for the vote would mean the destruction of property rights. "Is not private property abolished in idea if the non-property owner has become the legislator for the property

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7. Ray R. Sutton, "Presuppositions of Paedocommunion," *Geneva* Papers, Special Edition (1982); James B. Jordan, "Theses on Paedocommunion," *Geneva Papers*, Special Edition (1982); David Chilton, "Conversations With Nathan," Christianity and Civilization, No. 4 (1985); Peter J. Leithart, *Daddy, Why Was I Excommunicated?* (Niceville, Florida: Transfiguration Press, 1992).

owner? The *property qualification* for the suffrage is the last *political* form of giving recognition to private property."[8]

What Marx said regarding the civil franchise is equally true of the ecclesiastical franchise. When the non-tither is granted an equal vote with the tither, those who are not bearing their God-mandated economic responsibility become sovereign over the tithes of those who have remained faithful. There are far more non-tithers today than tithers. Majority rules! This transfers the authority over the distribution of the tithe from those who obey God's law to those who disobey.

The church is trapped in a dilemma because it correctly perceives that people should not be required to pay for access to the Lord's Supper. The requirement to pay a tithe would be an illegitimate barrier to the Lord's Table. But by opening the Lord's Supper to non-tithing members, today's church opens access to the franchise to these communicant members. This initial error - that all adult communing members are automatically voting members - leads to the second error: the transfer of authority from obedient members to disobedient members.

Two-Tiered Eldership: Boundaries

Catholicism guards its ministry from laymen by making celibacy a requirement for gaining entry into this separate sacerdotal caste. Protestant denominations use advanced formal education as their screening device. Presbyterian ruling elders are distinguished judicially from teaching elders (ministers), who are members of the presbytery not the local congregation. A candidate for teaching elder must be approved by presbytery A teaching elder is a member of a separate judicial class. This system is called the two-office view of the eldership.

In independent churches, the authority of the pastor is very great. There is no presbytery, synod, or other ruling body over

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8. Karl Marx, "On the Jewish Question" (1843), in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works,* vol. 3 (New York International Publishers, 1975), p. 153.

the local pastor. The judicial separation within the membership is rigorous. But the congregation is able to fire the pastor if the battle becomes an all-or-nothing conflict. The pastor still risks alienating the laity. New members have full voting privileges. His vulnerability increases. He cannot appeal beyond the local congregation to a higher body for protection or investigation of any charges (or rumors) brought against him. Thus, because of his lack of protection, those who vote in the congregation become dominant. These people may not have the maturity to make such decisions in today's church franchise system.

The biblical answer is two-fold: (1) unify the standards for the office of elder and then screen by talent, calling, and wage; (2) divide lay membership into those who exercise judicial authority (vote) and those who do not. Judicial (though not fictional) distinctions between classes of elders cease. Judicial distinctions - confession and tithe - between communicant members are established. Elders can then be elected by the local congregation to serve in whatever position their talents allow. Members who are not formally committed to the church's standards and to tithing will not determine who wins.

All elders must be screened in terms of the criteria listed in First Timothy 3. *No other formal criteria are biblically valid.* The bishops or the presbyteries (if any) may authorize a man to lead locally because he has superior theological knowledge or, better yet, superior wisdom, but there must be no requirement that candidates for the pastorate attend institutions of higher learning. Such formal academic requirements lead to *captivity by infiltration* of colleges and seminaries. The failure of the modern church can be traced, decade by decade, to the infiltration and emasculation of the seminaries. Such has been the curse of two-office eldership. Most churches are addicted to certification.

Two-tiered lay membership - voting and non-voting - must be substituted for today's two-tiered eldership and two-tiered membership: communing and non-communing.

Conclusion

There is two-tiered church membership today. There are halfway covenant members who have been baptized but who for some reason other than disobedience are not given access to the Lord's Table. There are also communing members who have passed through some judicial barrier: age, confirmation, profession of faith, a new members' class, etc. The trouble is, this system of two-tiered membership is imposed too low in the hierarchy The distinction should not be made in terms of access to the Lord's Table; it should be made in terms of access to the franchise. There should not be two-tiered membership based on communing vs. non-communing members; rather, it should be voting vs. non-voting members. Voting members must be tithers and subscribe to the creeds and confessions.

The problem with the organizational structure of modern Protestant churches is, first, they see the church as a contractual rather than a covenantal institution. They do not see it as created by a self-valedictory oath under God. They do not see it as existing under unique sanctions and in possession of unique sanctions. Thus, they view the Lord's Supper as anything but what it is: a covenant-renewal ceremony

Second, because churches reject the continuing validity of the Mosaic law, they reject the binding character of tithing. But tithing precedes the Mosaic law, as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews points out (Heb. 7:1-10). Tithing is grounded on the Abrahamic covenant. Churches today pay no attention.

Third, many churches allow open communion. They do not keep non-church members away from the Lord's Table. The result is that membership is seen as no more binding than membership in a local social club, and in some cases less binding. With no authority to excommunicate - to keep people away from the Lord's Supper - the church's most important sanction is stripped of all judicial significance.

Fourth, those churches that uphold closed communion see church membership solely in terms of lawful access to the sacra-

ments. They do not have a developed theology of the franchise: voting. That is, they do not discuss the right to vote in church elections in relation to economic sanctions. They allow disgruntled members to withhold their tithes when things do not go their way. They do not strip such rebels of the right to vote. They place the law of the tithe outside God's New Covenant law. The result is the transfer of church authority from those who bear their full economic burdens to those who do not. Non-tithers exercise authority over the funds collected from tithers.

The result is analogous in churches to the result in civil government: the creation of debt-ridden projects that have little to do with the Great Commission. People vote for bread and circuses, sometimes called" Family Life Centers: bowling alleys, basketball courts, and similar benefits.

Communicant members vote. In some denominations, older children do possess this authority. This obvious anomaly results from a false view of church membership: linking access to the sacraments with automatic possession to the franchise. Most adult communicant members are voting members. This is the same error that modern democratic societies make. Conservative Christians who perceive the evil results in civil government - the modern welfare State - do not recognize the same threat in the church.

The judicial error undergirding the modern welfare State began in the churches. This error moved to the State only in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Socialism is in fact a civil application of the anti-tithe concept of church government. The church was the original model: non-tithing members could vote. Voters today who do not bear the full burden of civil taxation – an identical percentage - are given the power to bring legal sanctions against those who exercise high office.

It is time to abandon this false concept of judicial sanctions in both church and State. All those who vote in church or State should pay the same percentage of their income to the respec-

tive covenantally authorized collection agency. Those who do not pay, or who pay less than the maximum required, should not be given access to the franchise. They are entitled to the benefits of living under God's law - both civil and ecclesiastical - but they are not entitled to the franchise.

4

WHEN ROYAL PRIESTS BEG

But ye are a chosen generation, a *royal priesthood,* an *holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him. who bath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light (I Peter 2:9).*

This is an inspiring passage, the fulfillment of Exodus 19:6: "And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel." Royal priests in principle possess title to both offices: civil and ecclesiastical. A royal priesthood is not Levitical; it is Melchizedekal: both kingly and priestly. "And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God" (Gen. 14:18). This priesthood's task is to rule - i.e., bring judicial sanctions - among the nations. In Psalm 110, one of the most frequently cited Old Testament passages in the New Testament and the early church,[1] we read:

> The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the

1. David M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand:* **Psalm** *110* **in Early** *Christianity* **(Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1973), p. 15.**

> womb of the morning. thou hast the dew of thy youth. The LORD bath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek (Psa. 110:2-4).

The mark of this Melchizedekal priesthood is its legal right to the tithe: "For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all" (Heb. 7:1-2a). He gave Abraham bread and wine. He blessed him. Then he accepted Abraham's tithe. *He did not have to beg Abraham in order to receive what was lawfully his.* Hebrews argues that Jesus Christ is the true Melchizedek. Jesus Christ does not beg. Why, then, do His representatives beg? Why have they become fill-time beggars?

Today, pastors beg for "free-will offerings." The church of Jesus Christ does not need free-will offerings. It needs predestinated tithing. Royal priests should not beg.

A Question of Sanctions

Christians must give their tithes to the churches because God has granted to the institutional church the authority to collect and disburse the tithes of His people. Christians are not to withhold any portion of their tithe as a means of punishing the local church. To imagine that such economic "voting" is valid is to make a catastrophic theological error: that God's people have been granted the authority to bring negative economic sanctions against the institutional church. A Christian is allowed to transfer his church membership – a form of *judicial* sanctions against a particular congregation or denomination - but he is not a God-authorized agent to bring economic sanctions against that congregation in which he receives the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. He is under its judicial sanctions.

Christians do not believe this. They have seen fit to bring God's church under their economic sanctions. They have decided to place the institutional church under their authority. They

have decided, week by week, whether or not to allow the local churches to partake at the tables of the members. This is a reversal of church order, where churches decide which members are in good standing and entitled to partake at the Table of the Lord. God has therefore brought His sanctions against an economically hard-pressed Christian community for their unlawful and arrogant attempt to sanction His church economically by withholding their tithes. They have reduced churches to the status of beggars. Meanwhile, God has made them second-class citizens, both economically and politically, sitting in the back of humanism's bus.

In our day, the church of Jesus Christ has been reduced to begging. It is a pathetic sight to see. It begs because its leaders, deep down in their souls, despise God's law. When was the last time you heard a sermon on the moral requirement before God for every member of the congregation to tithe ten percent. of his income to the local church? For that matter, when was the *first* time?

This defection of authority has reversed the hierarchy of the church, Rather than members being in judicial submission to elders, the elders are today in economic submission to members. Because the church refuses to preach mandatory tithing based on God's law, it has been forced into submission by members who allocate their gifts wherever they please. Almost always these gifts total less than ten percent. A false view of God's law has produced a false view of the primary sanction: economic rather than judicial. Rather than requiring the tithe from all voting members as a means of protecting the sacraments, the modern church has submitted to blackmail by theologically ill-informed, morally weak, and tight-fisted members. This has weakened the judicial boundary around the sacraments.

Beggars Can't Be Rulers

The evangelical church has become almost medieval in its concerns. It endlessly begs for money in order to build another

building. Unlike medieval cathedrals, however, the buildings that today's churches build are unlikely to become architectural classics that inspire men for centuries. They probably will not survive the next outward wave of urban blight. Or as we could say of Rev. Schuller's crystal cathedral, "People who preach in glass houses shouldn't build on the San Andreas fault."

Pastors beg. Congregations make down payments on new buildings. Then they struggle for years to meet mortgage payments. Mortgage debt transfers power to *spiritual blackmailers*: "Preach what we like to hear or we walk!" To tickle their ears, pastors preach less and less from the law of God. They preach possibility thinking, or positive confession, or some other variant of "think and grow rich." If they are more traditional (post-1830) in their theology, they preach the doctrine of the imminent Rapture,* which promises to relieve God's people from the pressure of paying off heavy mortgages. Lutheran and most Calvinist pastors preach arnillennialism: the eschatology of Christianity's guaranteed defeat in time and on earth, but without the hope in an imminent Rapture. So, God's royal priesthood shuffles along, looking over its collective shoulder for bullies.[3]

If local congregations want more income, here is a sure-fire way to get it:

1. Require every voting member to tithe: no tithe-no vote.
2. Have deacons police the voting members' incomes, just as the IRS polices it. Deacons represent an institution with greater covenantal authority than the State lawfully possesses.
3. Organize evangelism programs that bring more people into the congregation.
4. Challenge newcomers and non-voting members with a vision

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2. Gary North, Rapture *Fever: Why Dispensationalism is Paralyzed* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1993).

3. Gary North, *Millennialism and Social Theory* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990), ch. 9.

of victory that calls forth great dedication.
5. Provide motivation for people to make more money by getting more education and better jobs.
6. Show people ways to save ten percent of their income each payday.
7. Preach on the moral obligation to get out of consumer debt,
8. Start paying off the church's mortgage as fast as possible to set a good example.
9. Start allocating a tithe from the church's budget to help the poor.

This program is unacceptable to churches. It is based too heavily on discipline, personal responsibility thrift, and long-term planning. This is not the beggar's way.

Hat in *Hand vs. Checkbook in Hand*

American evangelical churches have no power and little influence because they are beggars. No one in a position of authority pays a great deal of attention to organizations that have so little discipline over their own members that they must go outside the local membership to beg for money. The *identifying mark of failure in life is beggary* (Ps. 37:25). *The* modern evangelical pastor is like Oliver Twist, standing in front of Mr. Bumble, empty bowl in hand: "Please, sir, may I have some more?" You may remember Mr. Bumble's reaction: outrage.

Let us compare a local church's influence with that of the Rockefeller Foundation. Who pays attention locally to the suggestions of local churches? Hardly anyone. Who pays attention locally to the suggestions of the Rockefeller Foundation? Lots of dedicated people do, people who want only to serve the public (at $75,000 a year plus expenses). They situp and take notice. The Rockefeller Foundation - actually, there are several Rockefeller Foundations - does not come to beg. It comes to write large checks. This makes all the difference.

Church and Parachurch

Debt-ridden, tight-fisted churches have become the monetary black holes of Christendom: money that goes in stays in. This has led to the rise of the parachurch ministries. In earlier days, these ministries supplemented the work of the churches. Today, they have too often replaced the work of the churches. And much of the blame rests on the churches.

Pastors often complain about parachurch ministries, with good cause. These rival ministries absorb donors' tithe money but they are not accountable to any organization, say the pastors (frequently pastors of local, autonomous churches that they run personally). But they have a good point about institutional accountability or lack thereof: he *who pays the piper* calls *the tune. The* donors to parachurch ministries provide the economic votes of confidence that sustain these ministries. Giving within the churches is supposedly voluntary Pastors therefore do not preach or enforce the tithe. Thus, the church becomes just one more beggar among many, like Oliver Twist.

Parachurch ministries have accepted the reality of voluntarism, and have adopted scientific fund-raising techniques that local pastors cannot successfully mimic. This places churches at a disadvantage in the begging profession.

If the churches would demand the tithe from their voting members, parachurch ministries would see their funds begin to dry up. Then the churches could begin to support those parachurch ministries that perform kingdom services that are difficult for the churches to perform. The churches would thereby invoke the division of labor (I Cor. 12). This would better promote the kingdom of God, and it would also put churches back into positions of authority.

He who pays the piper calls the tune. The reason why almost no one plays tunes that the church wants to hear is that the church refuses to pay the highly competitive pipers of this world. It decries the lack of accountability of other ministries, yet it refuses to insist on accountability from its own members. " We're

under grace, not law!" shout the antinomian pastors of many ecclesiastical traditions. "Amen to that!" respond the members of these congregations, putting away their checkbooks and pulling out their lonely $20 bills for this week's "sacrificial" family offering. Tithing is relegated to an Old Covenant that was run by a harsh and demanding God. So, the church begs. It pleads. It asks "pretty please." The covenant-breaking world sees this and cheers, Bronx fashion.[4]

The church has paid a heavy price for its unwillingness to preach the moral necessity of tithing. It has become a professional beggar, not out of necessity but out of principle. This has compromised the integrity of its testimony in our era.

Scientific Begging

Private charitable organizations come before the public in the name of the poor and downtrodden. They have to put on an effective show, since they cannot compel the transfer of funds, unlike the State's paid beggars. So they design special appeals letters, all scientifically calculated to separate the recipients from their money. In the upper right-hand corner we see a starving waif. The left-hand column has an eye-stopping "hook," such as:

> By the time you finish reading this letter, little M'Gumbo may have starved!

Actually, little M'Gumbo (or some other waif) could have starved three years ago, when his picture was taken and this successful promotional campaign began. Little M'Gumbo is a symbol - a symbol of poverty - and also a motivation device. There will be a never-ending stream of little M'Gumbos in your mailbox, whether you send in a check or not, and there will be a stream of other fund-raising letters until this approach no

4. **A reference for those who remember the fires of the Brooklyn Dodgers.**

longer keeps advertisers and administrators employed.

If the charity or ministry actually finances the purchase of tools and training for poor families, and if it preaches a view of time and law that instills faith in hard, smart work, meaning faith in future earthly blessings for those who work hard and smart, then there will be fewer little M'Gumbos in the future.[5] But until the potential donor gets a detailed report on the content of the preaching and the nature of capital delivered to the starving waifs and their families, he should keep a tight hold on his checkbook. He must guard against becoming the equivalent of the tourist, handing out his alms from a tour bus window. (The tourist at least enjoys the tour.) The guilt-ridden donor winds up paying for more find-raising campaigns and permanent employment for administrators. The Postal Service will get a larger percentage of his donation than little M'Gumbo and his starving friends.

The donor needs to know Is this find-raising campaign designed to heal his conscience temporarily or permanently heal a demonized social order? If the program is not designed to elevate families. out of poverty through increased productivity, and ultimately to elevate the whole mission field out of poverty through increased productivity, then the donor should seek out a different charity. The closer the program comes to indiscriminate alms-giving, as distinguished from culture transformation, the more it is like a subsidy program for beggars. There will always be beggars in pagan societies. There will always be a sense of futility for most people concerned: donors, administrators, and recipients. The only long-term beneficiaries will be those who write the find-raising letters.

The main victims are the churches that get short-changed and the donors who think of themselves as soup kitchen operators.

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5. David Chilton, *Productive Christians* **in** *an Age of Guilt-Manipulators: A Biblical Response to Ronald J. Sider (5th* **cd.; Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990), ch. 16.**

The Soup Kitchen Mentality

The charitable Christian usually regards himself as the administrator of God's local soup kitchen. It is mighty thin soup, too. He holds the ladle. In front of him is a small army of Christian organizations. Each month, these ragged beggars line up. As they come through the line, they hold out their bowls, and the man with the ladle doles it out to them from the pot, one by one. The beggar mumbles his thanks, and the master of the ladle says, "Bless you, my son." Or maybe he just says, "All right, let's keep it moving!"

Eventually one of them comes back. He holds out his bowl, like Oliver Twist, "Please, sir, may I have some more?" Every eye in the room is on him.

This is the moment of truth. If he is sent back in derision, the line remains orderly But if the ladle master is compassionate that day and spoons out another ladle full of soup, he will be in for a hard time. Every beggar in the room will make a rush for the pot. They all want some more. Lots more. More than any pot can hold. When it comes to ladling out free soup for all, you need a bottomless pot.

The administrator now has to make some rules. If the allocation system is not the familiar "first come, first served, once," then what will it be? The most touching story? The comparative thinness of the beggar? The loudest shout? The grayest beard? Whatever it is, the beggars will learn and adopt appropriate responses. "You want a sad story? Wait until you hear this!" The soup ladler is going to hear a large number of sad stories.

Stories in Your Mailbox

If the church is not based on a covenant, then it is just one more competitor for your finds. Once it acknowledges this by preaching voluntary offerings rather than the compulsory tithe, it has opened your wallet to every parachurch ministry Your mailbox is going to fill up. The stories you will be told! You like

to feed starving children? You will have a photo of one below the letterhead, and a brochure full of photos in the envelope. You like to read scare stories? A thrill a minute? A bureaucratic outrage for breakfast and two violations of the U.S. Constitution before lunch? They are as good as committed! How about a ministry deeply in debt, with you - yes, *indispensable you* -as the last barrier between that poor young woman tied to the rails and the train? Why, I can hear the train whistle now, can't you? This is an emergency!

What better way to identify an emergency than to send a letter disguised as a telegram? Organization X did. It said:

> I HAVE JUST RECEIVED A CRITICAL REPORT ON [X]'S FINANCIAL STATUS. [X] NOW FACES A MAJOR OPERATING DEFICIT OF $287,000.
>
> WITH APPROACH OF YEAR END, AM DEEPLY CONCERNED. AM COMPELLED TO RUSH YOU THIS URGENT MESSAGE. MUST SHARE NEED WITH YOU.

At first, I regarded this language as imitation "telegramese." But then I had a flash of insight! It may be imitation Sioux-American. I am tempted to write back

> BAD NEWS. HEAP BIG OPERATING DEFICIT HERE, TOO. NO WAMPUM LEFT. GREAT WHITE FATHER IN WASHINGTON SEND BLUE COATS. TAKE WAMPUM. TAKE BUFFALO JERKY TAKE FIREWOOD. LEAVE ONLY DRIED BUFFALO CHIPS. FREEZING MY TAIL FEATHERS OFF. I USE TELEGRAM FROM YOU TO START FIRE OF BUFFALO CHIPS. SMOKE NOW FILL TEEPEE. SMELL REAL BAD. NEVER HAD TROUBLE WITH BUFFALO CHIPS BEFORE. MAYBE PROBLEM WITH TELEGRAM. TAKE NAME OFF MAILING LIST TILL YOU USE BETTER BRAND OF PAPER.

You know what a $287,000 deficit means? It means the

outfit did not budget properly It means that its director violated the warning of Luke 14:

> For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply [it happen], after he bath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish (Luke 14:28-30).

But isn't it possible to make a mistake under pressure? Of course. But this outfit sends out one of these letters all the time. My parents were on the list, but they finally stopped giving: too many appeals for emergency money. I have spoken with other conservative Christian activists, and they have told me the same thing about the organization. They are the recipients of an endless stream of appeals, horror stories, and scare tactics.

Why? The person who heads the organization is neither incompetent nor immoral. Yet the appeals are mostly hype, and have been for several years. What went wrong?

There was a *transfer of authority:* from the visionary who heads it to the find-raising technicians who write the letters. Again and again, this has been the fate of the large parachurch ministries. The "pushers" take over, and once they do, the ministry is doomed unless they are all fired. This seldom happens in time. Instead, the organization's principled, talented people quit in disgust. The fund-letter writers win by default until the outfit collapses. Then they take their skills to their next victim, with its mailing list of about-to-become victims.

The ministry that hires professional find-raisers has become an addict. It does not take long to establish the addiction.

The Making of an Addict

I own a home study course by the man who pioneered these letters in the 1970's. He has lots of samples of his work, and

some very big evangelical (and not so evangelical) have their names on the letterheads. Step by step, he shows you how to write the hype. I refuse to do it with the Institute for Christian Economics.

These techniques work, but only for a while. Here is how it works. The dedicated visionary signs the first appeal letter, and a mountain of money rolls in. Fantastic! Think of the goals that can be attained now. Why, we can do so much more!

The founder's vision expands (the dominion impulse), new commitments are made, new staff is hired, and the money starts running out. What to do? Another letter. More money, more mailings, and more goals. The mailing list expands. The "free" literature goes out. The deficit grows. More appeals. More horror stories. More new projects to get donors excited about.

And then, finally, the day of reckoning. A mailing piece doesn't work. The follow-up also fails. Staff must be laid off. The visionary's reputation is on the line. Disappointment. Desperation. Maybe even bankruptcy - called a victory, of course. (Where is the Moral Majority today? Where is Oral Roberts' medical school? His law school?)

Why? Addiction. The experts who get hired to raise the funds know the techniques. *The techniques are designed to hook the organization.* Like the junkie who needs more doses to keep himself going, and who no longer gets the original "rush," so is the non-profit organization that hires its first specialist in direct mail techniques. Like the organic farmer who uses chemical sprays "just this once" to keep away this season's pests, so is the Christian parachurch ministry that hires professionals to tell a more impressive story each month than the local church can come up with. There will be more pests next year, all immune.

Once is never enough. The pushers know this when they offer the first one free of charge. "Wait until you see what we can do for you!"

The pushers steadily take over the ministry. This is a subtle process. It takes time. They become the lifeline to the source of

the funds. Once they addict the ministry to Big Things, it takes Big Injections to keep it going. Once the staff is hired to meet the initial level of donations, the deal is done. The debt addiction is established. One more project! One more victory! One more appeal! Three more fill-time experts! Radio! Television! A magazine!

But then a mailing piece fails. And a second. The organization suffers withdrawal symptoms. Out goes the fake telegram.

> HAVE ALREADY REDUCED [X] STAFF BY 10 PERCENT . . .
> PLEASE STAND WITH ME. ASK THAT YOU ACT QUICKLY . . .
> NO TIME TO LOSE.
> PLEASE SEND YOUR MAXIMUM CONTRIBUTION BY OCTOBER 31.

October 31: Halloween Day! Trick or treat, Christians. Fail to send money and the goblins will get you: "MADALYN MURRAY O'HAIR . . . A. C.L.U. . . . SENATOR TED KENNEDY."

It is tragic when this happens, but it is the inevitable price for any ministry that sees itself doing work on so large a scale that only an interdenominational cooperative church effort could accomplish it. Yes, the churches have defaulted. These parachurch ministries have tried to fill the gap. They can't, of course, but they try. Then the hype escalates, the mailings multiply, and the fiscal crisis hits. Then comes an economic recession: another giant ministry is on its back. We know what will happen next: "All that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish" (Luke 14:29-30).

There Is No Substitute for the Church

We must go back to the fundamental biblical principle: God's *work done in God's way. The* problem is, without God's Bible-

revealed law, we cannot know what God's way is. The evangelical church has rejected God's law. So, the church has locked itself inside its" cloister. The parachurch ministries have arisen to fill the gap. The result will be another defeat for Christianity.

We must get it clear: there is no substitute for the church. When it fails, Christianity suffers a body blow. No parachurch ministry can do the work of the church unless it is supported by the churches and is authorized by churches. Parachurch ministries should be supported by donations from churches and *offerings* from Christians. The day one of them adopts the techniques of political direct mail to get tithe-sized donations is the day God begins to shut it down. And so I say:

> CUT YOUR STAFF ANOTHER 10 PERCENT. BEGIN WITH THE DIRECT MAIL STAFF. THEN GET MORE CHURCHES INVOLVED. LOWER YOUR GOALS. DONT BITE OFF MORE THAN YOU CAN CHEW WITH LOW-HYPE OFFERINGS FROM SUPPORTERS. SEND PLEAS FOR MONEY FOR ONE PROJECT AT A TIME, AND DON'T START ANOTHER PROJECT UNTIL THE LAST ONE IS FINISHED. UNTIL THEN, TAKE MY NAME OFF YOUR MAILING LIST

I hold the hammer; I call the tune.

But I do not call it for the church: only for the parachurch. I do not hold the big hammer in history God does. He is represented by His church. Yet in my day, very few pastors believe this. Therefore, others hold the hammers; others call the tunes.

Conclusion

In Dallas, there is a fundamentalist ministry, Christ for the Nations. It is a very big foreign missions organization. They make this offer to local indigenous churches on the mission field: they will supply each congregation with a roof when the church's foundation and walls are erected. This makes sense,

not just for missionaries in darkest Africa but for Home Missions Boards in darkest America. Any congregation that asks for a dime from anyone outside the local congregation or the denomination is placing a sign across its doors: "Missionary Church: Still in Spiritual Diapers."

Royal priests should not be clothed in diapers.

The problem with beggars will not go away soon. We need to substitute comprehensive, universal tithing by all men for the erratic, unsystematic, emotion-filled giving of today. We need to filter most of our charitable giving through institutions that teach men that poverty need not be perpetual, that there are ways to get out of poverty, and that these ways involve lifetime thrift, hard work, smart work, and honest dealing. Professional beggars must be hemmed in by guilt-free living and systematic giving. A few charities deal with permanent poverty, such as those helping the severely handicapped and the senile. But most charities ought to be agencies of healing, not caretaking.

We must also replace the compulsory charity of the State with multiple charities organized by competing administrators. Every charity should be subject to scrutiny by the donors. There should be no concept of tenure, implied or explicit, associated with charitable giving. There are no free lunches, either for the poor or for the middle-class administrators who act on behalf of the rich and the poor, as well as for themselves. Charities must perform in a competitive market.

The church, however, is unique: God's sacramental monopoly. It is not just another competitor for the funds of Christians. It can and should compel payment of the tithe by its members. It should abandon begging and substitute judicial compulsion: no *tithe–no franchise.* But if the church refuses to take God's promises to Abraham seriously, it will also fail to take Melchizedek seriously. If Melchizedek is what Hebrews says he was - a man born without parents - then he was a theophany: the preincarnate Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity. He should be taken more seriously meal-giver *and tithe-receiver.*

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TITHES, TAXES, AND THE KINGDOM

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and *upon this rock I will build my church; and the* gates *of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the* kingdom *of heaven:* and *whatsoever* thou *shalt* bind on *earth skull be bound in /wavers: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on* earth *shall be loosed* in *heaven (Matt. 16:18-19).*

I have argued that the authority to collect the tithe from its members is the number-one economic mark of sovereignty for the institutional church. I have also argued that the modern State's ability to collect taxes above the level of the tithe is the number-one economic mark of covenant-breaking humanist man: the mark of tyranny (1 Sam. 8:15, 17). Finally, I have argued that the right of the individual, family, or business to retain at least 80 percent of its net increase is the economic mark of a free society.

The battle for control over the net productivity of men is a battle for the future. Basically, it is a battle for inheritance.[1] The question is today Who will win this battle: covenant-keepers or covenant-breakers?

Primary covenantal sovereignty in history belongs to the

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1. Gary North, *Inherit the Earth: Biblical Blueprints for Economics* **(Ft. Worth, Texas Dominion Press, 1987).**

church. The church is society's central institution. Primary economic sovereignty belongs to the individual, but this sovereignty is normally manifested through the family.[2] The State comes in third in the sovereignty race. This outrages those who proclaim the power religion: the State as healer.

The debate in Christian circles today seems to be between those who defend the primary sovereignty of the State and those who defend the primary sovereignty of the family. The problem is, we are talking about difFerent kinds of sovereignty. Primary judicial sovereignty belongs to the church; primary economic sovereignty belongs to the individual and the family; the State is to protect the sovereignty of the other two.

What I propose is a restructuring of the debate: a debate over the rights of inheritance. The State has made major inroads in this area. It wants the inheritance of both the family and the church. Neither the church nor the State creates wealth; both must be supported by those who do create wealth. The question is: Which of these two institutions will best protect the sovereign rights of those who create wealth? Which is the greater threat?

Church or State

Today, far too many Christian leaders are asking themselves: Which institution possesses greater sovereignty in history, church or State? Are both equally sovereign? The Bible is clear regarding economic sovereignty a State that taxes at a rate equal to the tithe is tyrannical (I Sam. 8:15, 17). Thus, the church possesses greater economic sovereignty.

But what about legal sovereignty? Here, again, economics comes into the picture. Legal sovereignty is visibly manifested by an institution's authority to impose taxation on others and escape taxation by others. Can the State legally tax the church?

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2. Gary North, *The Sinai Strategy: Economics* and *the Ten Commandments* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1986), ch. 5: "Familistic Capital."

Thii issue has been debated for centuries in the West; the issue has obviously not yet been settled.

Tithe or 2%x: An Inescapable Trade-Off

The church today, and throughout most of history, has refused to preach that its members owe God's local institutional church a full tithe on their economic increase. The State in the twentieth century has not suffered from a similar lack of will. It forthrightly declares its supposedly primaryjudicial sovereignty by imposing taxes far beyond the limits of God's tithe. This is to be expected, given the timid retreat of the church and the moral rebellion of its non-tithing members. Rushdoony has cited an early medieval sermon on the tithe. The preacher warned that if men do not pay their tithes to God, they will wind up paying them to the State:

> Our ancestors had more than they needed because they gave God tithes and paid their taxes to the Emperor. However, since we do not wish to share the tithes with God, everything will soon be taken from us. The tax collector takes everything which Christ does not receive.[3]

The modern church has seen this prediction come true - with a vengeance. The modern State takes at least 40 percent of most people's income, not just ten percent. Christians have denied the sovereignty of God to collect the tithe through His local church, but they have not denied the sovereignty of the State to collect taxes on a level twice as high as Pharaoh's 20 percent (Gen. 47:24).[4]

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3. R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Nutley, New Jersey Craig Press, 1973), p. 512.

4. Charles Adams, *For Good and Evil: The Impact of Taxes on the Course of Civilization* (New York Madison Books, 1993). See also his earlier book, *Fight, Flight, and Fraud: The Story of Taxation* (Buffalo, New York: Euro-Dutch Publishers, 1982). Finally see Carolyn Webber and Aaron Wildavsky, *A History of Taxation and Expendi-*

Economic Touchstones

The tithe is the economic touchstone of God's visible sovereignty in history. Collecting it publicly announces the sovereignty of the local church over its members, while paying it reveals the commitment of individuals and families to God. Whenever this ecclesiastical tax is denied by Christians, they will be placed under another sovereignty the State's. Taxes have become the economic touchstone of self-proclaimed autonomous man's sovereignty in history, and a giant touchstone it has become in the twentieth century.

By acknowledging the legitimacy of the State to impose and collect taxes, Christians are acknowledging the sovereignty of the State. They acknowledge the right of revenue agents to demand explicit statements regarding their income, as well as examine all of their income records. Christians today even acknowledge the authority of the State to tax them at levels vastly beyond the tithe, which Samuel said is a sure sign of tyranny The modern antinomian Christian does not take Samuel's warning seriously. Neither did the Israelites in Samuel's day. The results were predictable; Samuel predicted them.

Christians today do not acknowledge the authority of the local church to impose and collect the tithe. They do not acknowledge their obligation to supply income records, such as their income tax forms, to prove that they have paid their tithes. Thus, they are implicitly denying the sovereignty of the institutional church. It is this implicit confession that has placed the church in mortal danger from the modern messianic State.

The Power to Tax

"The power to tax is the power to destroy." So said Chief Justice John Marshall in his famous opinion in the case, *McCulloch v. Maryland* (1819). The state of Maryland had imposed a

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ture in the *Western World* (*New* York Simon& Schuster, 1986).

tax on all bank notes issued by banks not chartered by the state of Maryland, McCulloch, the cashier of the branch Bank of the United States in Baltimore, refused to pay the tax. Two legal questions were involved. First, did the U.S. government have the right to charter a private central bank? Second, was a state tax on such a bank constitutional?

Marshall accepted Hamilton's justification of a U.S.-chartered private central bank. This was a tragic decision on Marshall's part, one that Americans are still living with.[5] The bank was a secondary issue, however. The other question - taxation - raised the crucial legal issue of sovereignty. Immunity from taxation is a mark of original sovereignty, Marshall concluded. He saw the case as a dispute over ultimate legal sovereignty.

> If any one proposition could command the universal assent of mankind, we might expect it would be this - that "the government of the Union, though limited in its powers, is supreme withii its sphere of action. This would seem to result necessarily from its nature. It is the government of all; its powers are delegated by all; it represents all, and acts for all. Though any one State may be willing to control its operations, no State is willing to allow others to control them. The nation, on those subjects on which it can act, must necessarily bind its component pare. . . . The government of the United States, then, though limited in its powers, is supreme; and its laws, when made in pursuance of the constitution, form the supreme law of the land, "any thing in the constitution or laws of any State, to the contrary, notwithstanding."[6]

Because the issue was sovereignty, Marshall and the Court declared the tax unconstitutional, for Maryland's action had challenged Federal sovereignty.

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5. Elgin Groseclose, *Fifty Years of Managed Money: The Story of the Federal Reserve* (London Macmillan, 1966).

6. *John Marshall's Defense of McCulloch v. Maryland*, edited by Gerald Gunther (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1969), p. 27.

> If the States may tax one instrument, employed by the government in the execution of its powers, they may tax any and every other instrument. They may tax the mail they may tax the mint; they may tax patent rights; they may tax the papers of the custom-house; they may tax the judicial process; they may tax all the means employed by the government, to an excess which would defeat all the ends of government. This was not intended by the American people. They did not design their government dependent on the States . . . . The question is, in truth, a question of supremacy and if the right of the States to tax the means employed by the general government be conceded, the declaration that the constitution, and the laws made in pursuance thereof, shall be the supreme law of the land, is empty and unmeaning declamation.[7]

Should the Church Be Taxed?

Let us re-read this declaration by Chief Justice Marshall, lbut substitute a few words. All of a sudden, things become clearer, judicially speaking:

> If the States may tax one instrument, employed by the church in the execution of its powers, they may tax any and every other instrument. They may tax the tithe; they may tax the building they may tax baptisms; they may tax the communion meal; they may tax the church's judicial process; they may tax all the means employed by the church, to an excess which would defeat all the ends of ecclesiastical government. This was not intended by the American people. They did not design their churches dependent on the States. . . . The question is, in truth, a question of supremacy and if the right of the States to tax the means employed. by the church's government be conceded, the declaration that the Bible, and the laws made in pursuance thereof, shall be the supreme law of the land, is empty and unmeaning declamation.

But, of course, there has never been a public announcement

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7. Ibid., p. 47.

by the American people or the nations of the West that "the Bible, and the laws made in pursuance thereof, shall be the supreme law of the land." This is one reason why the American people and Western civilization are headed straight for God's visible judgment. Because the Bible is not recognized as being sovereign over the State, the legal protection of the church from the State must rest on the decisions of the State. In the long run, the State protects only those churches that share the humanists' view of the State's original sovereignty. This is why political pluralism inevitably leads to war on the people of God and the church. The issue of original sovereignty always reappears, and without the Bible, men refuse to recognize that God is the original Sovereign. Without this biblical theocentric doctrine, the State always proclaims itself as the original sovereign, and the church becomes the great enemy of the statist orders The State becomes the god of the social order: statist theocracy.

Pluralism and Polytheism

Political pluralism - the civil equality of all religions - is a manifestation of polytheism: *multiple ethics, multiple gods.*[9] This view of history insists that God has not spoken and does not speak authoritatively to anything political, so neither should His ecclesiastical representatives. Christians generally accept this assertion today. Once it is widely accepted, the humanist announces a new doctrine: *everything is ultimately political.* Conclusion: *God does not speak authoritatively to anything in history,* and neither should His ecclesiastical representatives.

Humanists prefer this conclusion and steadily work to impose it judicially. The pluralism-preaching Christians start to squirm. Still, they eventually capitulate. They would rather

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8. R. J. Rushdoony, *The One and the* **Many:** *Studies* **in** *the Philosophy of Order and Ultimacy* **(Fairfax, Virginia Thoburn Press, [1971] 1978), ch. 6.**

9. Gary North, *Political Polytheism The Myth of Pluralism* **(Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989), pp. 75-76.**

believe that God's revealed word speaks authoritatively to nothing than to conclude that it speaks to politics, thereby making Christians responsible for announcing the standards of righteousness in the arena of politics. This is too much like ancient Israel's prophetic preaching. It can get a fellow persecuted.[10]

Will the U.S. Supreme Court become consistent with the humanist-pietist presupposition that God does not speak to politics? This presupposition is manifested in the Internal Revenue Code: if a church speaks officially to any issue that might conceivably become subject to a vote by Congress, it can have its tax exemption revoked. Applying this "gag rule" to a church requires the State to make the determination that churches are tax-exempt institutions that are created by the Federal government, just like a foundation or other charitable trust. It assumes that the Federal government has granted the churches their tax exemption. It assumes that churches are, as legal entities, creations of the State.

The biblical response is this: churches are tax-*immune*.[11] They enjoy delegated authority from the true original Sovereign, God. The State did not create them. They are certainly just as immune from taxes by any branch of civil government, as the Federal government is immune from taxation by the state governments. Inherent in the sovereignty of the church is the same tax immunity that is the prerogative of every level of civil government: to escape taxes imposed by all subordinate governments. *The church is not subordinate to the State.* Yet in their view of church sovereignty many Christians are unsure about this legal principle. It sounds too radical. It did during the Roman Empire, too, which is why the State persecuted the church.

The question of institutional subordination is crucial. The

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10. Gary North, Rapture *Freer: Why Dispensationalism is Paralyzed* **(Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1993), ch. 2.**

1 L Douglas F. Kelly "Who Makes Churches Tax Exempt?" *Christianity and Civilization,* **No. 3 (1983).**

mark of sovereignty is not immunity from taxation as such. It is rather immunity from taxation by any subordinate government. The family is certainly a sovereign covenantal institution, but its assets are not immune from God's tax, the tithe, even though it is a lawful covenantal government. Similarly the assets of the family are subject to taxation by various levels of civil government. The family is therefore under authority. The only universal mark of God's delegated institutional sovereignty is the presence of a *self-maledictory oath*: church, State, or family. Once a marriage takes place, only death - covenantal and/or physical - can break the partners' legal bond: "Till death do us part."[12]

The mark of ultimate earthly institutional sovereignty is tax immunity *The highest level of government in the social order is immune from taxation by other government-s.* In the case of the institutional church, there is no higher level of human government; hence, God has declared it in principle immune from taxation by the State. There was no God-authorized civil tax on the tabernacle or temple by the kings of Israel. When King Hezekiah used the gold of the temple to pay tribute to Assyria, the Assyrians immediately invaded the land and besieged Jerusalem (II Ki. 18:13-17). This was a sign of God's judgment against the king. The only thing that saved Hezekiah was Assyria's arrogance against God (18:19-35) and Hezekiah's request to Isaiah that the prophet appeal to God to uphold His own name in the face of Assyria's challenge (19:4). By accepting this tribute payment that had been coerced from the temple, and by announcing his sovereignty over Judah, King Sennacherib of Assyria doomed his own kingship and his empire; his army was decimated by a plague, and he was assassinated (19:35-37). The Babylonian empire was soon to replace Assyria as the greatest of all the empires of the ancient Near East.

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12. *Ray* R. Sutton, Second Chance: *Biblical Blueprints for Divorce and Remarriage* (Ft. Worth, Texas Dominion Press, 1987).

Babylon later fell in the same way. When Ring Belshazzar brought out the confiscated plates of the temple to be used in a feast, he doomed his kingdom that very night. "Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone. In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote" (Dan. 5:3-5). "In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain" (v. 30). The Medo-Persian empire triumphed. (So did Daniel.)

The institutional church is tax-immune. It is a sovereign agency of government. In times of self-doubt, Christians do not understand or acknowledge this sovereignty, and the church falls under the heel of some strutting king or political order. When the prayers of the faithful are not uttered in judgment against the usurpers, then the thieves can strut for a bit longer. But the usurpers' end is as sure as Assyria's and Babylon's. They will fall. The handwriting is already on the wall.

Judgment and Representation

In a tyrannical era, churches that resist are publicly silenced by the State. In every congregation are informants. If the pastor deviates from State-authorized pietism, he is arrested. Z_'bus, if the churches are publicly to pray the imprecatory psalms - the psalms of God's historical cursings - they must do this before foreign tyrants arrive, or before domestic tyrants are voted into office. But few churches have prayed these psalms historically - Psalm 83 is the best example- and so the tyrants steadily encroach upon church prerogatives. As the noose tightens, these psalms can be prayed only in tiny unauthorized groups or in personal prayer closets.

It is indicative of the condition of today's churches with

respect to their enemies that almost no denominational hymnal today includes all of the psalms, especially the psalms calling down God's judgment on His enemies, nor do the prayer books include all of the psalms. Few Christians have ever heard an imprecatory psalm directed from the pulpit against an abortionist, let alone a public official.

Excommunication

Protestant Christians (and a lot of married ex-Catholic priests) have abandoned the idea that excommunication means very much. It is seen only as a temporary annoyance. If excommunicated, a person can always walk down the street and join another church. He is not told that excommunication has eternal consequences. He is not even subjected to official temporal consequences. Excommunicates laugh in their hearts at the idea that anything a church's officers say judicially has any effect in history or in eternity. They see themselves as immune from judgment by the church.

Having lost their fear of the efficacy of this rarely applied church sanction, Christians have also lost respect for church government generally. This is their first step toward hell and its earthly manifestation, political tyranny Societies cannot escape external government, so the State steps in to replace the vacuum created by the church's defection. This was understood by Paul from the beginning, which is why he called on the church of Corinth to judge its own disputes and not seek peace in pagan civil courts (1 Cor. 6).

Tyrants increasingly recognize the universally acknowledged impotence of church sanctions. They understand all too well that if the church is not seen as God's authorized representative agency, it can exercise only minimal authority. To be a representative government means that its officers *speak judicially* in the Sovereign's name. This is certainly true of church government. Because Christians almost universally ignore a local church when it speaks judicially against them in God's name,

tyrants conclude that they too can safely ignore all churches. As tyrants consolidate their power, churches increasingly cease to speak judicially against the actions of the State.

The churches have today set the pattern. Because most churches refuse to honor each other's excommunications, thereby announcing publicly their own" judicial impotence, they forfeit the visible sign of their position as God's representatives. They forfeit their claim to be a lawful government. The State then refuses to honor any subsequent claims of legal immunity from State control that are based on God's delegated sovereignty to the church. The U.S. Internal Revenue Code, not the Bible, becomes the standard of what is suitable in the pulpit.

Can the Church Buy Peace by Its Silence?

Today, at least a few biblical laws are being preached in conservative churches. As social crises escalate, there will be a coming to terms with point four of the covenant: *sanctions.*[13] The abortion issue has polarized many churches - not just against each other but also internally Churches are splitting over the right-to-life issue, and if the Supreme Court is foolish enough to become truly consistent - if it revokes the tax exemption of churches that publicly oppose abortion - then we will see church splits as never before. The hard-core Christians and the soft-core Christians will battle for control of churches.

If the hard-core Christians lose most of these battles, as is predictable, given the churches' addiction to tax exemption, they will then find it economically unnecessary to keep fooling around with the theology that undergirds modern tax exemption, namely political pluralism. The underfunded, taxpaying hard core of the evangelical world will get very, very dedicated in its commitment to a theology very close to biblical theocracy. After all, if the State takes away a church's tax exemption, the

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13. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper:* **Dominion** *By Covenant* **(2nd cd.; Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1992),&.4.**

pastor can become more serious in the pulpit. The carrot will have been removed; only the stick will remain: an opportunity for martyrdom.

The threat of the removal of tax exemption is another reason why it is now *imperative that churches get out of debt.* A debt burden that relies on tax-deductible donations to keep the mortgage money flowing becomes a trap when the State threatens to cut off the tax deduction for donations. The fear of bankruptcy will frighten pastors and congregations into self-conscious pietism. To maintain a clear voice in a time of crisis, Christians have got to stay out of debt - personally corporately and ecclesiastically.

Obviously if the church loses its savor, it will be fit for grinding down. Buying time buys only time. If with each stage of the State's encroachment on church authority, the churches become even more irrelevant, then the process of erosion will not be stopped, at least not by anything that the compromising churches are willing to do. The State will have succeeded in suppressing the church by installments. It has done this through the public school system, by encouraging pietism, and now by the threat of taxation.

The long-term problem with the State's strategy is this: as the State becomes more consistent, it draws forth a far more determined opposition from a minority of dedicated opponents in the churches. Perhaps these people are pressured to leave controversy-avoiding local churches. Others may actually transform wavering churches, making other Christians more aware of the spiritual battle.

When the State makes the battle visible by stepping on the toes of Christians on issues that are clearly real-world issues - church schools, tax exemption, abortion, euthanasia, etc. - the bureaucrats pull a minority of pietists out of the clouds. The State's actions make visible historical and concrete key issues that had long been ignored as spiritual, i.e., ethereal. This makes the religion of pietism less easy to believe in. When your

toes are hurting, you begin to ask "Why? How long? How can I get these bureaucrats off my toes?" Some Christians will surrender, hoping for the best; others will resist.

We will see which local churches become hard-nosed activists that challenge the growth of tyranny and which become more firmly pietistic in their quest for peace, proclaiming the ability of Christians to live under any form of civil government (except, of course, biblical law). What we can expect to see is a series of divisions over this question within each of the camps. One's enemies will increasingly be found in one's own ecclesiastical household.

When Push Comes to Shove

As the State becomes progressively more hostile to any alternative to the religion of humanism, the ability of Christians to believe that religion and politics do not mix is steadily reduced. While there are always mystics within the churches - people who self-consciously are escaping from this world by means of "higher consciousness" techniques - they are always a tiny minority They are also generally outside the American Protestant religious experience. The majority of pietists are somewhat schizophrenic: their retreat from the world is in part theological and in part emotional, but if you push them too hard, they will fight back. They are instinctively individualistic, and they resent interference. Leave them alone, and they remain no political threat. Push them around, and you will get a fight. Once they are in the fight, many of them will respond favorably to a theology of activism. They will abandon their retreatist pietism, which they held to only because the State had not yet become consistent in its hatred of Christianity

This is what has been taking place in the U.S. since about 1960. The State has become more consistent, and a growing minority of Christians have begun to recognize that the myth of neutrality is indeed a myth. The State has hidden under cover of this myth just as surely as the Christians have hidden under

the cover of the myth of the separation of religion and State - the baptized version of the myth of neutrality. Because the bureaucrats have stopped honoring the myth, a growing minority of Christians have also stopped honoring it.

Now, the question arises: What comes after the myth of neutrality is abandoned? Will it be the destruction of the church, or the destruction of the secular humanist State? Will we see the taxing of the church or the drastic shrinking of the State? If there is no neutrality, then the bureaucrats are quite correct in pulling the tax exemption of the churches: what churches preach must have a political impact. The humanists believe that everything is at bottom political; therefore, nothing the church does or says can avoid becoming political. Thus, there is no escape from the taxation of churches if the humanist agenda is allowed to unfold. As the war on the church progresses, so will the war by Christians against the State.

The Myth of Neutrality

One casualty is certain: the myth of neutrality. Once that long-accepted myth finally lies dead on the battlefield of the warring kingdoms (civilizations), Christians will at last be in a position to build a self-consciously Christian civilization. They will no longer believe that they are dependent on the intellectual and cultural scraps that fall from the table of their enemies.

This is the inevitable fate of the myth of neutrality. This myth has long been used as camouflage for numerous groups that seek enough time to get their religious position into power. Then the cover is discarded. Many people may believe in it during the early stages of its career, but as time goes by, the more consistent theorists and power-seekers realize that it is a myth. People are either covenant-keepers or covenant-breakers. As time goes on, they act more consistently with their ultimate religious presuppositions. C. S. Lewis wrote in 1946:

If you dip into any college, or school, or parish, or family -

> anything you like - at a given point in its history, you always find that there was a time before that point when there was more elbow room and contrasts weren't quite so sharp; and that there's going to be a time after that point when there is even less room for indecision and choices are even more momentous, Good is always getting better and bad is always getting worse the possibilities of even apparent neutrality are always diminishing. The whole thing is sorting itself out all the time, coming to a point, getting sharper and harder.[14]

So, there is no long-term hope in buying time through silence, unless Jesus comes again very soon to pull His people out of oppression. This has been the widespread belief among American fundamentalists for over a century but now that hope is fading. Pretribulational dispensationalism is losing its adherents, either to postribulational dispensationalism or to postmillennialism.[15] These Christians are no longer banking on the so-called Rapture-as their cosmic escape from their earthly troubles, including political oppression. As this faith in the escape hatch in the sky has faded, Christians have begun to acknowledge humanism for what it is, namely, an aggressive religion of empire that will allow no independent authority for churches unless they worship the State.

We saw all this during the Roman Empire. It did no good for the churches to seek to buy time by toning down the comprehensive message of Christ's world-transforming gospel. It will do no good this time, either.

Conclusion

The Christian church must defend its authority to collect the tithe from all of its voting members. It must defend its claim to be the sole legitimate depository of the tithe. It must defend itself as a separate covenantal authority, ordained by God and

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14. C. S. Lewis, *That Hideous Strength (New* York Macmillan, 1946), p. 283,
15. North, *Rapture Fever*.

tax-immune from the State. But the modern church refuses to assert the first two claims, so it finds itself in a weak position with respect to the third claim: its legitimacy as a separate legal jurisdiction. Until the church takes itself, the sacraments, and the tithe seriously, it will continue to be on the defensive against the humanist State.

The State is on the march in this century. It is appropriating the inheritance of families and all other institutions. The public's faith in the power religion and its economic corollary, socialism, is beginning to fade, but as yet no institution and no rival social order has the public's confidence. The State wins by default until such an alternative presents itself and provides visible evidence of its superiority

If Christians are not sure about the limits of civil government, they are equally unsure regarding the rights of inheritance. They must finance the kingdom of God. The State insists that they finance the kingdom of man. The public schools are the visible manifestation of this kingdom. In second place are the various State pension systems. Both are sacred cows politically. Until Christians are willing to announce their confidence in the church's right to their tithes rather than the State's right to far more than a tithe, they will continue to suffer the expropriation of their children's inheritances. The kingdom of man will attempt to confiscate the assets of the kingdom of God, just as it has sought to do since Eden. .

The church is not just "one more judicial voice among many." It alone is God's voice in history with respect to men's eternity. Representatively the church declares God's word, executes His judgment, and excommunicates members who rebel against God in biblically specified instances. But the church does not take its monopoly seriously. It has imbibed humanism, with humanism's doctrines of pluralism - a form of polytheism. Until the church abandons modern political and religious pluralism, it will continue to be on the defensive.

Until the church preaches the absolute sovereignty of God

and the derivative sovereignty of the institutional church, it will remain on the defensive. This defensive stance will continue to be revealed by the local church's hesitancy to affirm publicly its monopolistic authority to collect ten percent of its members' net income. Any suggestion that the institutional church has not been authorized by God to collect the entire tithe from Christians is an implicit surrender to humanism and the humanist State.

This leads us to Part 2 of this book.

CONCLUSION TO PART 1

And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Luke 22:29-30).

Jesus made it clear that taking the Lord's Supper is a means of dominion. The Lord's Supper is more than a mere convention, tradition, or empty rite. It is also more than a memorial. It is a means of extending the kingdom on earth. In our day, few churches cite this passage prior to the Lord's Supper. There are many reasons for this, but the main one is that few churches believe in the visible triumph of both the gospel and the church during the New Covenant era.

I have argued in this section of the book that God's absolute sovereignty undergirds His delegation of limited covenantal sovereignty to church, family, and State. Each of these institutions is established by means of an oath sworn under God, either implicitly or explicitly, personally or representatively No other institution is so established. All other institutions are under the authority of one or more of these three.

The economic mark of the sovereignty of the church is its authority to collect and distribute the tithes of its members at a rate of ten percent. The economic mark of the sovereignty of the State (taken as a collective: local through international) is its authority to collect and distribute tax revenues at a maximum rate often percent of its subjects' income. The economic mark

of sovereignty of the family - in God's eyes - is its authority to retain and allocate at least 80 percent of everything it earns, net. The modern messianic State has made great inroads on family sovereignty. It has also made inroads on church sovereignty, though not at so great a rate.

The church has failed to defend its legitimate sovereignty over its members. This failure is visible in the fact that it has not preached the tithe as amorally mandatory tax on members.

The church in the United States has also failed to defend its legitimate sovereignty with respect to the State. It has become fearful of the State because the State threatens to revoke the tax-exempt status that the State has granted to the churches. The Western church outside the United States has been in subjection to many humanist States throughout the twentieth century. The church is visibly in retreat: theologically, culturally, and economically. This retreat will eventually end.

The era of extended State sovereignty is drawing to a close. There is a worldwide tax rebellion going on, and it will escalate. Economic decentralization will place far greater power into the hands of individuals and small businesses than ever before. The question is: What will replace the messianic State? Will it be the Christian church and the Christian family? Or will it be some pagan imitation of either or both?

By tying my defense of the tithe to a defense of the sacraments, I have focused on the twin monopolies that God has granted to the institutional church. Their unity cannot be broken, despite attempts by theologians, pietists, and pagans to dismiss the first as annulled and deny the judicial relevance of the second.

If the institutional church is to regain the pre-eminence it once had in the West, let alone extend its influence throughout the world, it must preach the moral obligation of the tithe, the judicial relevance of the sacraments, and the church's absolute monopoly over both. If it refixes to do this, it will remain on the defensive: culturally, economically and judicially.

Part 2

RUSHDOONY ON CHURCH, TITHE, AND SACRAMENT

For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, **Take, eat:** this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we **should** not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world (1 Cor. 11:23-32).

And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching **(Heb.10:24-25).**

INTRODUCTION TO PART 2

And I say also *unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail* against it. *And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed* in *heaven (Mutt. 16:18-19).*

In Part 1, I presented my case for the morally mandatory nature of the tithe, the church's authority to collect it from its members, and the church's monopoly over the sacraments as the judicial basis of its right to collect and distribute the tithe. In the Conclusion to Part 1, I wrote:

> By tying my defense of the tithe to a defense of the sacraments, I have focused on the twin monopolies that God has granted to the institutional church. Their unity cannot be broken, despite attempts by theologians, pietists, and pagans to dismiss the first as annulled and deny the judicial relevance of the second.

I now come to the writings of the premier American theologian who has most forcefully dismissed the church's authority to collect the tithe: R. J. Rushdoony. He has tied his rejection of the institutional church's authority over the tithe to a rejection of the church's authority in general. And, as we shall see, for over two decades he personally abstained from the sacra-

ment of the Lord's Supper. his ended only in late 1991. I suggest reasons for this remarkable and overnight change of opinion in Chapter 10.

An Open Division Since 1981

The Christian Reconstruction or theonomist movement received its initial theoretical formulation in 1973. In that year, Craig Press published two books: R. J. Rushdoony's *Institutes of Biblical Law* and my *Introduction to Christian Economics.* Rushdoony's book contained three appendixes by me; my book contained one by him. What had been a multi-volume negative critique of modern culture, beginning with Rushdoony's *Intellectual Schizophrenia (1961),* became in 1973 a positive statement of faith. The *Chalcedon Report* newsletter had been publishing bits and pieces of this positive agenda since its founding in 1965, but only in 1973 did the preliminary general statement appear, with footnotes. In that same year, I began my monthly column in the *Chalcedon Report*: "*An* Economic Commentary on the Bible."

In 1981, the Christian Reconstruction movement openly split into two rival camps. The co-founders of the movement could no longer agree with each other on some fundamental issues.[1] The official basis of the division was a brief four-page manuscript written by me and submitted to Rushdoony as a monthly column in the *Chalcedon Report.* I had based the essay in part on an observation in James Jordan's 1980 Westminster Theological Seminary master's thesis.

Rushdoony in a letter accused me and Jordan of blasphemy - not mere heresy - and wrote to our pastor, Ray Sutton, about these supposedly blasphemous ideas, demanding that we recant in writing and agree never to discuss the topic again in our future writings. In his letter to me, which was written on Chal-

1. See Chapter 6, below, subsection on "The Doctrine of the Church in Christian Reconstruction."

cedon stationery, he announced: "What you two are saying is insane blasphemy and MUST be recanted."2 Notice the ecclesiastical judicial term: *recanted.* A church court issues such a demand only at the final stage of a heresy trial. Then he wrote to both me and Jordan to "retract your views in full in writing to Pastor Sutton, with copies to me."3

Rushdoony had no authority over me except as my part-time employer, and he had none over Jordan, who had not been employed by Chalcedon for over a year, yet he co-addressed his demand to Sutton. He went directly to our pastor without submitting himself to any church court or first confronting either of us with a witness as required by Matthew 18:18-20. He failed to pursue the case further when Rev. Sutton[4] asked him by phone what ecclesiastical authority he was under, should his accusations prove false, thereby subjecting him to a countercharge of bearing false witness. Rushdoony hung up the phone and never spoke to any of us again.

When I tried to resolve the split in late 1981 by having lawyer John Whitehead mediate, Rushdoony agreed, but then he refused to meet with me when I arrived. I later agreed to several offers of mediation. These offers came individually from Charles Simpson, Dennis Peacocke, and Jay Grimstead. Rushdoony always refused to adjudicate the matter. In Peacocke's case, this refusal was in writing. He argued that because this split is in no way personal, but strictly theological, it cannot be informally adjudicated. Fine; then it will have to be adjudicated in written public debate. This book is a good place to begin.

For over a decade, many people, including me, wondered why Rushdoony had "blown up over that brief essay. Only in 1991 and 1992, when he wrote a pair of articles for the Eng-

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2. Letter of July 20, 1981.

3. Rushdoony to Jordan, North, and Sutton, August 5, 1981.

4. Dr. Sutton is today the president of Philadelphia Theological Seminary the seminary of the Reformed Episcopal Church.

land-based theonomic magazine *Calvinism Today,* did things become clear. These two articles dealt with the doctrine of the church. They broke radically with the Calvinism-Presbyterianism-Anglicanism of Rushdoony's early career. It was clear, a decade late, why the heavy emphasis on church authority by the leaders of the Tyler congregation had alienated Rushdoony so totally. They held a high view of the institutional church.

I believe there are two fundamental issues involved here: the doctrine of the church and the control over money. No one has to explain to modern readers why money can become a divisive issue. The first subject, however, needs more discussion. That is why I wrote this little book, which is an extension of Appendix B in *Boundaries and Dominion: The Economics of Leviticus* (forthcoming). Since that very large book will be seen by few and read by fewer, I decided to write this short book. I was also strongly pressured by Rushdoony's extraordinarily unwise challenge in the October, 1993, issue of the *Chaldedon Report* (*see* Chapter 10, introductory quotation). By the first week of December, this book was at the printer's.

The issue is sovereignty. Rushdoony has long argued that legal sovereignty belongs only to God; so, no human institution possesses sovereignty.[5] This interpretation of sovereignty is incorrect. While God does have absolute sovereignty, He delegates limited sovereignty to three institutions: church, family and State. This delegated sovereignty is marked by the presence of oaths taken before God, either explicit or implicit (i.e., in baptism). These oaths are self-valedictory they invoke God's sanctions, both positive and negative. But on one point, Rushdoony is correct: "Sovereignty means taxing power: hence the tithe."[6] The question is: *Who is* sovereign over *the collection and distribution of the tithe?* On this point, the debate must begin.

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5. Rushdoony, *The Roots of Reconstruction* (Vallecito, California Ross House, 1991), pp. 624 (Jan. 1968), 648 (Oct. 1968).

6. R. J. Rushdoony, *Law* and Society, Volume 2 of *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Vallecito, California: Ross House, 1982), p. *534.*

6

PRIMARY SOVEREIGNTY CHURCH OR FAMILY?

And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation. Neither must the children of Israel hence.. forth come nigh the tabernacle of the congregation, lest they bear sin, and die (Num. 18:21-22).

The text is clear: the Levites as a tribe were entitled to the entire tithe. That is, they had a legal claim on it: "all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance." This inheritance was as secure legally in God's eyes as the landed inheritance of the other tribes. Of course, it was far less secure operationally; the men of Israel did not always pay their tithes. Those who refused to pay their tithes to the Levites were guilty of robbing God. As surely as it was theft to steal title to another man's land, so was it theft to withhold any part of the tithe from the Levites. The first form of theft was active; the second form was passive; but both were theft. "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation" (Mal. 3:8-9).

The context is equally clear regarding the legal basis of this

entitlement the Levites' service as guardians of the tabernacle/temple's sacramental boundary. They were required to stand at this sacramental boundary and restrain (probably execute) anyone who trespassed it (Num. 18:1 -22).1 The Levites' entitlement and the Levites' task as boundary executioners were explicitly linked by the Mosaic law.

There can be no doubt: the Levites were entitled to the whole tithe. I ask again: On what legal basis? The text answers: their service in the temple. But which form of service: sacramental or social? I answer: sacramental. Rushdoony answers: social. On this seemingly minor issue, the Christian Reconstruction movement has divided. It will remain divided until one side or the other gives up its view of the judicial basis of the tithe, or until one of them disappears. (The latter is more likely.) Contrary to those people who blame all institutional divisions on personality conflicts - even God vs. Satan, I suppose- the dividing issue here is ecclesiology: the doctrine of the church, and has been since 1981.

Church and Tithe

The theology of the tithe is not a minor issue; it is central to biblical ecclesiology. It is also important for a proper understanding of the covenant - specifically, the church covenant.[2] The tithe is an aspect of judicial authority in the church, i.e., point two of the biblical covenant model, hierarchy-representstion.[3] This representation is both substitutionary ("Who or what in history dies in my place?") and judicial ("Who in histo-

1. On the debate within modern Jewish scholarship on the Levites as executioners -Jacob Milgrom vs. Menahem Haran - see James B. Jordan, "The Death Penalty in the Mosaic Law," *Biblical Horizons Occasional Paper No. 3* (Jan. 1989), Pt. 3. Milgrom argues that the Levites were armed guards; Haran denies this. Jordan agrees with Milgrom.

2. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper:* Dominion *By Covenant* (2nd cd.; Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1992), chaps. 10, 11.

3. Ibid., Ch. 2.

ry declares me judicially acceptable before God?").

The proper performance of this representative ecclesiastical office does mandate certain social services - charity, for example - but the covenantal-judicial basis of the eldership is not social; it is sacramental (point four of the biblical covenant model: oath-sanctions).[4] A man is not a minister of the gospel just because he calls himself one or because he is charitable. He is a minister only because he has been ordained by a lawful church. Ordained ministers guard the sacraments against profane acts: boundary violations. That is, they control lawful access to the sacraments. They include some people and exclude others. The following four aspects of a church are judicially linked: the formal ordination of ministers by other ministers (i.e., no self-ordination or ordination by laymen), hierarchical authority (an appeals court system), ministerial control over legal access to the sacraments, and the local institutional church's exclusive authority to collect and *distribute all* of its members' tithes in God's name. To deny any one of these aspects of the church is to call into question all four. So it was under the Mosaic Covenant; so it is under Christ's New Covenant. Rushdoony has implicitly denied the first two points by defending ecclesiastical independency and he has emphatically denied the other two. He is consistent (or at least he was until October of 1991).[5] His theological critics had better be sure their theological positions are equally consistent.

The Doctrine of the Church in Christian Reconstruction

The major dividing issue within Christian Reconstruction has been the doctrine of the institutional church. Officially, the

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4. **Similarly the office of civil magistrate, called "minister" by Paul in Romans 13:4, is also based on point four: sanctions, in this case, negative sanctions. He punishes evil-doers (v. 4).**

5. See Chapter 10.

movement split in 1981[6] over Rushdoony's outrage regarding a minor theological point in an essay I submitted as my monthly column in the *Chalcedon Report*. I had relied on a passage in James Jordan's 1980 master's thesis.[7] Rushdoony had made a very similar observation in the Institutes, which he probably had forgotten making! I find it difficult to believe that this blow-up on Rushdoony's part was based merely on a brief section in Jordan's master's thesis. Jordan had sent him a copy of it over a year before the blow-up; he had remained silent about it. I believe that the real offense was our view of the institutional church, which we had begun to promote vigorously through the fledgling Geneva Divinity School. There was an irreconcilable division over the correct answer to this question: *What is the fundamental institution in the long-term process we call Christian reconstruction?* Rushdoony has repeatedly answered: "the family," along with its subordinate agency, the Christian school. The "Tyler wing" of the Christian Reconstruction movement answered: "the church." There is no way to reconcile these views.

If this dispute were simply over the percentage of men's income owed to God, it would not be a major dividing issue in

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6. My last year as editor of *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction* was in 1981.

7. **Jordan's master's thesis had been accepted by Westminster Theological Seminary (Philadelphia). The offending passage - on the circumcision of Gershom by Zipporah - appears on pages 85-86. An expansion of this observation was later published by Jordan in his book, *The Law of the Covenant: An Exposition of Exodus 21-23* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1964), Appendix F, "Proleptic Passover," Rushdoony initially demanded that I defend my observation in greater detail, which I did. He then said my defense was insufficient. He then fired me as editor of% *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*. I later published a larger version of this defense "The Marriage Supper of the Lamb," *Christianity and Civilization*, No. 4 (1985). No other critic has ever written to Jordan to challenge his essay as heretical. I have never received a single letter from anyone other than Rushdoony, pro or con, regarding my essay. The whole incident was officially based on a trifle. In this book, I deal with what I regard as the unstated dividing point: Rushdoony's view of the institutional church.**

8. R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Nutley, New Jersey Craig Press, 1973), pp. 427-29. On the close connection between Rushdoony's comments and my own, see North, "Marriage Supper," p. 218.

our day. There is nothing unique about Christians today who dismiss as "legalism" any suggestion that they owe ten percent of their net income to God. But Rushdoony, as the co-founder of Christian Reconstruction, could hardly take this antinomian approach to the question of the tithe. The Bible is clear about the tithe's mandatory percentage: men owe ten percent of their net income to God.[9] The argument is not over the tithe's percentage; the argument is over which agency (if any) possesses the God-given authority to collect it and then distribute it. The debate within Christian Reconstruction is over this question: Where is *the locus of God's delegated sovereignty over the allocation of tithe: In the tither or the institutional church?* I answer: with the institutional church. Rushdoony answers: with the tither.

From 1965 until today, Rushdoony has sporadically attempted to cobble together a doctrine of the institutional church in order to support his view of the tithe. His view of the tithe is that Christians can lawfully send the tithe anywhere they wish; therefore, the institutional church has no lawful claim to any portion of the tithe, or at least not above the tenth of a tenth that went to the Aaronic priesthood under the Mosaic law. He has needed a doctrine of the church in order to defend such a thesis theologically. In this section of the book, I examine the connections between his view of the tithe and his view of the institutional church.

This has not been an easy task. Rushdoony has never written a book on the doctrine of the church, nor do I expect him to, for reasons that will become clear as you read this section. (This is even more true of his defense of the continuing authority of the Mosaic dietary laws: not so much as one full page of exegesis devoted to the topic, despite its great importance for him personally as a distinguishing mark of his theology.)[10] There

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9. There is a subordinate question the third-year tithe and the poor tithe. Were these separate, additional tithes? Rushdoony argues that they were. Rushdoony, *Institutes*, p. 53.

10. He never comments on I Corinthians 8: "Howbeit there is not in every man

is no issue of Chalcedon's *Journal of Christian Reconstruction* devoted to the doctrine of the church. I assure the reader, this was not my decision as the editor of the first fifteen issues, 1974-1981. In Tyler, I participated in a symposium on "the Reconstruction of the Church" in 1985, which my monetary offering above my required tithe financed.[11]

Priesthood and Family

Late in his career, Rushdoony has attempted to trace the institutional church back to the family - not just chronologically but covenantally. This theory of ecclesiastical origins is the heart and soul of this, his most important theological error. He writes: "The father of the church was Abraham, with whom God made a covenant (Gen. 15), and through whom the covenant sign, circumcision, was instituted (Gen. 17). The covenant with Israel in Exodus 20 is a continuation of the same covenant, a covenant of grace and law. The church thus began as a family, and the structure of both the covenant nation and congregation retained this same character."[12] The church began as a family, Rushdoony says; hence, the family in both his theology and his social theory is the central institution: the master covenantal model. Rushdoony's social theory is familiocentric. He regards the institutional church as an extension of the family.[13]

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that knowledge for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat nob are we the worse" (w. 7-8).

11. James B. Jordan (cd.), "The Reconstruction of the Church," Christianity *and Civilization*, No. 4 (1985).

12. R. J. Rushdoony, "The Nature of the Church," *Calvinism Today*, I (Oct. 1991), p. 3. This journal is published in England: F! O. Box 1, Whitby, North Yorkshire Y021 1HP.

13. I would call any social theory *emanationist* which traces the ongin of church, State, or family to one of the other institutions. Christian social theory must be Trinitarian, insisting on thecovenantal uniqueness of each of the three institutional covenants.

In his view, the great war for the minds of men is the war between family and State. The Bible teaches otherwise.

What Rushdoony fails to recognize is that the New Covenant priesthood did not originate with Abraham. It originated with Melchizedek. Abraham paid his tithe to Melchizedek, and he received bread and wine from him (Gen. 14:18). Jesus Christ's high priestly office was grounded in Melchizedek's primary priesthood, not Levi's secondary and judicially subordinate priesthood (Heb. 7:9-10). Here is the fatal flaw in Rushdoony's familiocentric argument: *Melchizedek had no parents* (Heb. 7:3). I take this literally: Melchizedek was therefore a theophany. At the very least, he had no genealogy, indicating that his authority was not derived in any way in the family. Melchizedek is the recitation of Rushdoony's ecclesiology and therefore of his entire familiocentric social theory.

The Biblical Position: Ecclesiocentrism

I have long disagreed with Rushdoony on the centrality of the family in Christian society. The fundamental institution in history is not the family; it is the church, which extends beyond the final resurrection as the Bride of Christ (Rev. 21). The family does not: there is no marriage in the resurrection (Matt. 22:30). Jesus made it plain: the false ideal of the sovereign family is a far greater threat to Christianity than the false ideal of the sovereign State. Jesus never spoke this harshly regarding the State:

> Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variante against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me,

> He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it (Matt. 10:34-39).

The family is temporary limited to history: no marriage in the resurrection. The State is temporary also limited to history no suppression of evil (Rem. 13:4) in the post-resurrection, sin-free world. But the church is eternal. *The church is therefore the central human institution. The family* and the State are legitimate covenantal institutions in history, but they do not possess the most important authority given by God to any institution: the power to excommunicate. Why is this the most important sanction? Because it alone is binding in eternity. Breaking the family bond by death or divorce is not binding in eternity physical death through execution is not binding in eternity. In contrast, lawful excommunication is binding in eternity. Christian social theory must affirm without compromise or qualification that the true sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper are more important in history than the democratic State's imitation sacrament of voting or the family's imitation sacrament of sexual bonding.

Rushdoony understands the relationship between church authority and excommunication, so in order to defend his sociology of familism, he has denied that the church possesses the authority to excommunicate, as we shall see. *He has thereby denied the existence of the keys of the kingdom - the* judicial authority of the institutional church in history (Matt. 16:19). He does this in the name of Christian orthodoxy, as we shall see.

The Conservatives' Position: Familiocentrism

Why do social and political conservatives traditionally identify the family as the central institution of society? There are two primary reasons. First, because they reject the liberals' assertion that the central social institution is the State. In this they are correct. Such a view is necessary but not sufficient for accurate social theory. Second, because they adopt natural law theory.

We must examine both assumptions: one incomplete and the other incorrect.

Anti-Statism

Conservatives regard the family as the only institution with sufficient authority and respect to challenge the State successfully on a long-term basis.[14] They view the social function of the institutional church as an adjunct to the family, just as liberals see the church as an adjunct to the State. Conservatives rarely view the institutional church as a covenantally separate institution possessing superior authority to both family and State. This is a serious error of analysis.

The authority to excommunicate is the greatest judicial authority exercised in history. The lawful negative sanctions of the :rod (family) and the sword (State) are minor compared to the sanction of excommunication (Matt. 16:19). But because formal excommunication does not impose bodily pain in history, modern man dismisses the church's authority in both history and eternity. This includes modern conservatism. It also includes most Protestant churches, who refuse to honor each other's excommunications. They thereby deny Jesus' words: "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28). The only agency in history that lawfully announces a person's condemnation to hell - short of repentance before physical death - is the institutional church. This authority is implicitly recognized by the modern Western State. A condemned criminal on his final walk to the place of execu-

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14. One of the strongest statements to this effect was written by G. K. Chesterton. The family he wrote, "is tbe only check on the state that is bound to renew itself as eternally as the state, and more naturally than the state." Chesterton, "ThStory of the Family" in *The* Superstition *of Divorce (1920); The Collected Works of G. K. Chesterton, vol. 4 (San* Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), p. 256. His reference to eternity betrays his confused social theology: neither the human family nor the state is eternal, the church is (Rev. 21, 22).

tion cannot legally be accompanied by his spouse or his political representative; he can be accompanied by a minister

The battle between patriarchalism and statism in the West has been going on at least since the rise of the Greek city-state, an outgrowth of clans and family sacrifices.[15] The problem is, the family always loses this battle as a covenant-breaking society advances over time because the family does not have the power possessed by the State: the monopoly of life-threatening violence. Step by step, the State replaces the family in the thinking of most members of covenant-breaking society. The State possesses greater power; in the power religion of humanism, this justifies the expansion of the State.

The family fights a losing defensive battle when it fights alone. Its authority is steadily eroded by the State. For example, the divorce rate rises when the State replaces the family's functions, especially its welfare functions. Therefore, if the familiocentric view of the church were true-the church as an adjunct to the family- the church would inevitably lose alongside of the family. Yet this view of the church is widely held today. Result: those people inside various church hierarchies who seek power have increasingly allied themselves and their churches with the State.[16]

Natural *Law Theory*

An implicit natural law theory undergirds conservatism's social analysis: belief in the existence of moral absolutes that are discoverable by universal logical principles. This faith in moral-logical universals undermines the judicial authority of the church. The Trinitarian church is not universal in human

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15. Fustel de Coulanges, *The Ancient City: A Study on the Religion, Laws, and Institutions of Greece and Rome* (Garden City, New York Doubleday Anchor, [1864] 1955).

16. C. Gregg Singer, The *Unholy Alliance (New* Rochelle, New York Arlington House, 1975). This book is a detailed history of the Federal Council of Churches and its successor, the National Council of Churches.

history the State and family are. "Religion" and "the sacred" are undeniably universal in history; the church is not. Because the family and the State appear to be the universal institutions, and because the church exists only where Christianity has made inroads, conservatives conclude that the war for liberty can be won only if the family is strengthened against the State. The church is regarded by conservatives as a useful ally in the family's battle against the State. The church serves as social cement; this is preferred to political cement. Whenever the church claims more than this subordinate role for itself, American conservatives become leery. This is why the primary authors of the U.S. Constitution - right-wing Enlightenment humanists[17] - were willing to mouth words of praise for "religion," but never for Jesus Christ as the incarnate Second Person of the Trinity nor for His church.[18] Religion in general is elevated; the church in particular is demoted.

This view of the church implicitly places world history above church history because the institutional church has been narrower in its influence than mankind up to this time. The most universally accepted opinions and logic of "mankind in general" are assumed by natural law theorists to be the legitimate moral and judicial standards for all societies. This implicit and some-

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17. Gary North, *Political Polytheism: The Myth of Pluralism* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989), Part 3.

18. George Washington and Abraham Lincoln spoke of religion and morality as great benefits for society. Neither of them was willing to profess personal faith in the work of Jesus Christ as the sole pathway to eternal life. Religion in their view is instrumental rather than foundational. See Paul F. Boiler, George *Washington & Religion* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1963). Washington refused to take the Lord's Supper throughout his adult life. Lincoln avoided commenting publicly on his religion except in the 1846 Congressional campaign, when he issued a handbill admitting that he was not a churchmember, but assured voters that they should not vote for a man who scoffs at religion. "Handbill Replying to Charges of Infidelity," *The Collected Works of* Abraham Lincoln, edited by Roy P. Basler, 8 vols. (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1953), I, p. 382. See also his "National Fast Day Proclamation" (Aug. 12, 1861), where he spoke of "the Supreme Government of God." *Ibid.*, VI, p. 482.

times explicit humanism of natural law theory is contrary to the Bible's revelation of God's work in history through His covenant people. Covenant-breakers are adjuncts to covenant-keepers in history, just as the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10) will be an adjunct to the culmination of the New Heaven and New Earth (Rev. 21: 1) in eternity. Covenant-keepers rather than covenant-breakers are the focus of history. Israel was central to the ancient world, not the great empires. The exodus is central to human history, not the fall of Troy. The angel of death is central to human history, not the Trojan Horse. The Pentateuch is central to human history, not *The Iliad*, *The Odyssey*, and *The Aeneid*. Moses is central to human history, not Plato and Aristotle. Special grace is central to history, not common grace.[19] Natural law theory, whatever its specific ethical content may be - on this crucial point, natural law theorists disagree - is the outworking of common grace. Bible-revealed law is central to history, not natural law. Looking back from eternity, all men will recognize this. Men are required by God to evaluate history in terms of what He has revealed about eternity, not evaluate eternity in terms of what men assume about history. Humanism denies this. So does natural law theory.

Conclusion

The Levites were entitled to all of the tithe because of their service as guardians of the temple. They were members of a tribe to whom God had delegated the sacramental function: the maintenance of the sacrifices. A subdivision of the Levites, the sons of Aaron, were the priests who administered the sacrifices. The Levites guarded the boundaries of the temple.

The institutional church inherits this exclusive authority to collect the tithe in the New Covenant. Its judicial function is the same: sacramental. It baptizes and serves the Lord's Supper. It

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19. Gary North, *Dominion* and Common Grace: *The Biblical Basis of Progress* **(Tyler, Texas Institute for Christian Economics, 1987), &.6.**

has a monopoly over the sacraments; therefore, it has a monopoly over the tithe.

The division within the Christian Reconstruction movement is based on a debate over the nature of the institutional church and its judicial authority to collect all of the tithe. Rushdoony traces the church to the family; the other wing sees the church as a separate covenantal organization. Rushdoony's view of society is familiocentric; the other wing's view is ecclesiocentric.

This irreconcilable theological dispute has created several other areas of dispute, but this one is the starting point. This one, in my eyes and Rushdoony's, is a non-negotiable issue.

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RUSHDOONY'S ECCLESIOLOGY

General William Booth, founder of the *Salvation Army, rightly ridiculed the church as* a *mummy* factory.

R. J. Rushdoony (1992)[1]

We come now to Rushdoony's view of the institutional church. He subordinates it to the doctrine of the family. In doing so, he adopts familiocentrism, though not natural law theory. His abandonment of theonomy in favor of traditional conservativism has undermined the very foundation of his theology. His view of church and family was an anomaly in his original theology - an error no larger than a man's hand. Like Elijah's cloud, however, it has grown into a mud-producing storm since 1981.

Rushdoony has systematically avoided developing a doctrine of the institutional church, either in print or on audiotape. I believe his refusal to present his ecclesiology is deliberate. His few scattered works on ecclesiology written since 1970 have broken not only with the Westminster Confession of Faith (which he officially had to affirm until he resigned from the

1. R. J. Rushdoony, "Reconstructing the Church," Calvinism *Today*, II (July 1992), p. 24.

ministry of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in 1970) and the Thirty-Nine Articles of Episcopalianism (which he has officially affirmed since 1974), but with all of Trinitarian orthodoxy from the Council of Nicea forward.

Critics of the church's lawful, God-ordained claim on every individual's lifetime commitment again and again seek to elevate "Christianity" and dismiss "the church," as if there could somehow be Christianity without the church and its mandated sacraments. One sign of a person's move away from historic Christianity's doctrine of the church to conservative humanism is his adoption of the pejorative word, *Churchianity*.[2] The person who dismisses "churchianity" is often a defender of his personal ecclesiastical autonomy a sovereign individual who judges the churches of this world and finds them all sadly lacking. In his own eyes, all the churches fall short of his almost pure and nearly undefiled standards. No church announces God's authoritative word to him; rather, he announces God's authoritative word to the churches. No church officer represents him before God; instead, he represents himself. Like the foolish defense lawyer who hires himself as his own advocate in a court of law, so is the man who is contemptuous of "churchianity." He confidently excommunicates all churches for failing to meet his standards. All congregations have failed to measure up, except (should he deign to begin one) his own. He ignores the obvious: *a self-excommunicated person is no less excommunicated.*

Rushdoony's views on the institutional church have become adjuncts to his theory of the tithe. Prior to his assertion in 1992 of the Chalcedon Foundation's status as a church as well as a governmentally chartered educational organization, his views on the tithe were fully consistent with his views regarding the visible church. They constituted a single, consistent, and monumental error. This error, if applied retroactively to the con&-

2. **For a good example, see Rushdoony's editorial, "Copycat Churchianity," *Chalcedon Report* (June 1992).**

sions of Volume 1 of The *Institutes of Biblical Law,* would destroy the covenantal basis of Rushdoony's theology and therefore also his social theory.

The fact is, his three-fold error came late in his career. This shift in theology began shortly before he left the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in 1970, but it was not completed until the early 1980's. In other words, what Volume 1 of *The* institutes bath given, Volume 2 need not take away. Only small traces of his error are visible in Volume 1; this error can and must be separated from that foundational book. Because of this, I find it necessary to challenge the book that he and Edward Powell co-authored, *Tithing* and *Dominion* (1979).s The chapters are identified as to which author wrote which. I refer here only to Rushdoony's chapters. (Rushdoony broke decisively with Powell shortly after he broke with me and Jordan.)

Tithing and Dominion

With respect to the task of dominion, the Bible teaches, first, that the dominion covenant was established between God and the family. God has assigned to the family the primary dominion task in history (though not in eternity): to be fruitful and multiply (Gen. 1:26-28) - a biological function.[4] Second, as we shall see, the tithe is a mandatory payment from man to God through a covenantal institution: the church. Therefore, if the tithe were the basis of dominion, God's law would mandate a tithe to the family, the agency of dominion. But there is no God-specified mandatory payment to the family, i.e., no legal entitlement. On the contrary it is the productivity of individuals, families, and other voluntary associations that is the source of both tithes and taxes. This is inevitable: *the* source *of the fund-*

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3. Edward A. Powell and Rousas JohnRushdoony, *Tithing and Dominion* **(Vallecito, California Ross House, 1979).**

4. Gary North, *The Dominion Covenant: Genesis* **(2nd ed; Tyler, Texas Institute for Christian Economics, 1987), ch. 3.**

ing cannot be entitled to funding.[5] The individual[6] or family is the source of the funding. The tithe is therefore owed to the institutional church by the individual or the family.

Rushdoony has defended the tithe as the foundational basis of biblical dominion. He has also described the church as an unproductive organization, as we shall see. Conclusion: *if* the *tithe* is foundational to dominion, and *if* the church is unproductive, then *it is the tithe rather than the church which is the source of Christianity's* cultural *productivity.* In terms of such a perspective, the institutional church's importance in the dominion process is secondary to the tithe's importance. This is exactly what Rushdoony began saying publicly after 1973.[7]

It is not clear to me whether his doctrine of the church and his doctrine of the tithe originally stemmed from his decision to redirect his own tithe money into the Chalcedon Foundation and to remove himself from the authority of any local church, or whether his shift in theology came first. These events surely paralleled each other chronologically (see Chapter 10, below). He did not bother to articulate his views on the tithe until the late 19'70's. Today, however, it is clear that his published doctrine of the church is an extension of his published doctrine of the tithe. He constantly writes about the tithe; until his 1991 essay in Calvinism *Today*, he steadfastly refused to write clearly about the institutional church.

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5. There are parent-child economic requirements, but these are intra-family relationships.

6. This would include those fictitious legal individuals known as corporations. One way to solve the problem of tithing on retained earnings would be for ten percent of the common shares of all new corporations to be assigned to a specific church from the beginning. The church would automatically participate in all dividends and capital gains.

7. When I served as a Board member of the Chalcedon Foundation in 1975, Rushdoony was directing his own tithe into Chalcedon, as he told me. I was a paid staff member at the time. He did not ask me to follow his lead, nor did I volunteer to do so. I have no reason to believe that he subsequently re-directed his tithe to a local church, since he did not belong to a local church.

Church and Sanctions

In contrast to the family, both State and church are lawfully entitled to economic support from those who are under their respective covenantal authorities. The State's jurisdiction is territorial (e.g., over non-covenanted resident aliens) and judicial (e.g., over its covenanted citizens who live outside the State's territory). The church's jurisdiction is equally judicial, though not (in Protestant societies) territorial. Both institutions have lawful claims before God over a small portion of the net productivity of all those under their jurisdiction. Their God-given authority to impose negative sanctions against those who refuse to pay is the outward mark of their covenantal sovereignty. *To deny the right of either church or State to bring such sanctions is a denial of their covenantal sovereignty.*

Rushdoony has understood this with respect to the State; he has therefore opposed the tax revolt or "patriot" movement.[9] But he has denied that any payment is automatically owed to the institutional church. No church can lawfully compel its members to pay it their complete tithe or even any portion thereof, he insists. "It is significant, too, that God's law makes no provision for the enforcement of the tithe *by man.* Neither church nor state have [sic] the power to require the tithe of us, nor to tell us where it should be allocated, i.e., whether to Christian Schools or colleges, educational foundations, missions, charities, or anything else. The tithe is to the Lord."[10] He then cites Malachi 3:8-12. With respect to the tithe, Rushdoony believes in *the divine right of the individual* with respect to the institutional church: no earthly appeal beyond conscience. This is not an error of logic on his part; it is a consistent application

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8. U.S. citizens living outside the U.S. must pay income taxes on their salaries. The first $70,000, however, is exempt.

9. R. J. Rushdoony, "The Tax Revolt Against God," Position Paper 94, *Chalcedon Report* (Feb. 1988), pp. 16-17.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

of his ecclesiology.

The existence of a mandatory payment to the church is evidence of a covenantal relationship: *a legal bond established by* a *self-maledictory oath*[11] which each church member takes either explicitly or representatively (by parents). The church has a lawful claim on a tithe of every member's net increase in income.[12] Unlike the State, which is ruthless in collecting taxes owed to it, the modern church rarely enforces its lawful claim. This is not surprising: the modern church rarely enforces anything under its lawful jurisdiction.[13] The State has arrogated power to itself in the face of the churches' defection. In our day, most Christians regard this as normal and even normative.

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11. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant* (2nd cd.; Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1992), pp. 83-91. Rushdoony refuses to discuss tbe self-maledictory oath as the judicial baais of all four biblical covenants personal, church, State, and family. He defines the covenant aa God-given law rather than aa oath-invoked God-given law. This unique judicial oath formally invokes God's sanctions. Without thii formal invocation, there is no redeeming covenant bond possible. There is only the general, Adamic covenant bond: a broken covenant. Rushdoony's definition does not acknowledge this fact. He writes: "In the Biblical record, covenants are laws given by God to man aa an act of grace." Rushdoony, "Covenant vs. Contract," *Chalcedon Report* (June 1993), p. 20. If correct, this definition would make the covenants universal, since biblical laws govern everything in history, as he haa long argued. But if he were to discuss the sanctions-invoking oath as basis of the four covenants, he would have to discuss oath-breaking in thchurch and ita formal sanctions the doctrine of excommunication. He would also have to discuss in detail Article VI, Section III of the U.S. Constitution, which prohibits religious test oaths for Federal (national) officeThis is why the U.S. Constitution is an atheistic, humanistic document- a fact which Rushdoony has refused to accept for over three decades. See Gary North, *Political* Polytheism: *The Myth of Pluralism* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1989), Appendix B.

12. This obligation does not apply to gifta from husbands to wives and vice versa; nor does it apply to intra-family gifta to minors. Parenta who feed their children need not set aside a tithe on the food so consumed. The obligation iacovenantal, and the institutional payment of the tithe by the head of the household serves aa a representative payment for all of its members.

13. At worst, a pastor who is convicted of adultery is suspended for a year or two. I know of at least one case where an admitted adulterer was asked by his presbytery ordy to transfer to another presbytery. The members' idea of negative sanctions was limited to "Not with our wives, you don't!" He voluntarily left the ministry. I bought part of his library.

They prefer to think of the church as judicially impotent. They prefer to think of the State's physical sanctions as the greatest possible sanctions. They refuse to regard formal excommunication as threatening them or anyone else with eternal consequences. Like the humanists, they prefer to fear men rather than God. They stand in front of the local church and in effect chant the child's challenge: "Sticks and stones can break my bones, but names ['excommunicant'] can never hurt me!"

Neither the State nor the church is a profit-seeking organization. This is why both possess lawful claims on a small part of the net productivity of their members. Therefore, they cannot be primary agencies of dominion in history. They are secondary agencies of dominion.[14] Thus, I conclude, the tithe cannot be a primary aspect of dominion. It is a secondary aspect.

Productivity

This is not to say that church and State are not economically productive. They are the source of God's authorized covenantal sanctions: the negative sanctions of the sword (State) and the positive and negative sanctions of the keys of the kingdom (church). Rushdoony's language is seriously misleading when he writes that "church and state are not productive agencies."15 This is the language of secular libertarianism, not Christianity. Nevertheless, he makes an important point: "The state is a protective agency whose function is to maintain a just *order*, to insure *restitution* for civil wrongs, and to *protect* the people from external and internal enemies. . . . The church's

14. This is why the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20 is not strictly an extension of the dominion mandate of Genesis 1:26-28. A small portion of the fruits of dominion are brought to the institutional church. The church is not the source of these fruits. The institutional church, through its authority to declare someone as an adopted son of God, brings covenant-breakers formally into the eternal household of God, but the institutional church is not itself a family. It possesses greater authority than the family.

15. Rushdoony, *Law* and Society, vol. 2 of *Institutes of Biblical Law* (Vallecito, California: Ross House, 1982), p. 129.

function is *protection and nurture* by means of its ordained ministry."[16] What is the biblical meaning of "protection"? Civil protection means *the defense of* boundaries - judicial rights against invasion, either by individuals or by the State itself. Protection by the State is achieved by its enforcement of negative sanctions against evil-doers (Rem. 13: 1-7). Biblically speaking, the State provides no lawful positive sanctions, e.g., nurture. Protection by the church is also achieved through its imposition of negative sanctions (e.g., I Cor. 5). Nurture by the church is the product of positive sanctions (e.g., II Cor. 8).

Rushdoony mistakenly contrasts these beneficial covenantal functions with what he calls "productivity." His view of productivity is incorrect. These covenantal functions are basic to productivity, but they cannot be financed unless those under their authority remain productive. The income of both church and State must come from the outside: from God through the individual and the corporate entities that are under the respective jurisdictions of church and State.

Rushdoony discusses the non-productivity of the church. in a chapter on the Lord's Supper (Holy Communion). He makes a catastrophic theological error by denying the sacramental basis of the church. "The problem in history has been the unhappy sacramentalization of church and state."[17] He rightly castigates the idea of a sacramental State, but then writes: "Similarly, the church sees itself as the sacramental body and preempts Christ's role. Communion is thought of as a church rite rather than Christ's ordinance." This contrast implicitly assumes that Holy Communion is not a church rite, i.e., not a biblically mandatory ritual: a false theological assumption if there ever was one. He reduces communion to a "feast of charity" or a "love feast."[18] He never acknowledges the sacrament of the

16. *Idem.*
17. *Ibid.,* p. *128.*
18. *Idem.*

Lord's Supper as a *divinely empowered covenant-renewal ceremony of the institutional church,* a ceremony that invokes God's positive and negative sanctions in history and eternity.

The institutional church has only one ultimate means of discipline: excommunication, i.e., excluding a person from the rite of the Lord's Supper. Without the positive sanction aspect of the Lord's Supper, the negative sanction of exclusion is judicially meaningless. Such a *nominalist* view[19] of the Lord's Supper strips the institutional church of its disciplinary authority. Rushdoony has not heeded Calvin's warning when Calvin wrote that "it is certainly a highly reprehensible vice for a church not to correct sins. Besides, I say our Lord will punish an entire people for this single fault. And therefore let no church, still not exercising the discipline of the ban, flatter itself by thinking that it is a small or light sin not to use the ban when necessary."[20] Nor, with respect to local church membership and faithful weekly attendance, did Rushdoony pay attention personally from at least 1970 until late 1991- assuming the Chalcedon Foundation is in fact a church - to Calvin's next warning "But this is not to say that an individual is justified in withdrawing from the church whenever things are contrary to his will."[21] Calvin did not defend the individual's autonomy in relation to the institutional church. Calvin fully understood what the sole basis of a declared Christian's judicial separation from the institutional church has to be: excommunication.

Excommunication can be of two kinds: excommunication by the institutional church and excommunication by the former church member, i.e., self-excommunication.

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19. *The* nominalist acknowledges no judicial authority beneath the words that define the sacraments. Thus, the sacraments become a mere memorial. This was Zwingli's view of the Lord's Supper. It is also the Baptist view.

20. John Calvin, "Brief Instruction for Arming All the Good Faithful Against the Errors of the Common Sect of the Anabaptists" (1544), in *Treatises Against the Anabaptists and Against the Libertines,* edited by Benjamin Wirt Farley (Grand Rapids, Michigan Baker, 1982), p. 65.

21. *Idem.*

The Sacraments

Rushdoony's view of the local church affected his doctrine of the sacraments. He neglects - and his exposition necessarily denies - the sacramental basis of the local church's authority to collect the tithe. "As against an empty rite, Christian fellowship in Christ's calling, around a table, is closer to the meaning of the sacrament."[22] But if the judicial rite of the Lord's Supper is not backed up (sanctioned) by the promise of eternal sanctions, both positive and negative, then it is truly an empty rite: *judicially* empty - the nominalist-fundamentalist-memoriidiat view of the sacraments: Anabaptism.[23]

Rushdoony's post-1973 published view of the church is non-covenantal: the church as a fellowship without judicial sanctions rather than an institution possessing the judicial keys of the kingdom. He has even insisted that a church has no lawful authority to discipline those members who refuse to attend its worship services: "We are urged not to forsake 'the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is' (Heb. 10:25), but the church is *not* given authority to punish those who do."[24] Then who is? Only God, apparently There is supposedly no appeal beyond the individual's conscience: the "divine right" of a non-attending church member. Then what judicial authority does the institutional church possess? In Rushdoony's view, none. What meaning does church membership have? Less than membership in a local social club, which at least requires the payment of dues for membership. In Rushdoony's theology, a local flower arrangement society possesses more authority over its members than a local church possesses over its members.

Rushdoony's view of church discipline represents a fundamental break from the history of the church, including the

22. Rushdoony, *Law* and *Society*, p. 129.

23. On this question, Zwingli was an Anabaptist.

24. Rushdoony, "The Nature of the Church," Calvinism *Today*, (Oct. 1991), p. 3.

theology of the Protestant reformers and especially Calvin. Rushdoony insists (without any citations from the Bible) that a Christian has the God-given authority to remove himself indefinitely from a local congregation and cease taking the Lord's Supper, but without ecclesiastical judicial consequences. This necessarily implies that self-excommunication, which is a form of excommunication, is not an actionable offense within the church. This is a denial of Holy Communion, for it is a denial of excommunication.

From Calvinism to Autonomy

Calvin was clear about the keys of the kingdom in history. He cited Matthew 16:19: "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." He then commented that "the latter applies to the discipline of excommunication which is entrusted to the church. But the church binds him whom it excommunicates – not that it casts him into everlasting ruin and despair, but because it condemns his life and morals, and already warns him of his condemnation unless he should repent. . . . Therefore, that no one may stubbornly despise the judgment of the church, or think it immaterial that he has been condemned by the vote of the believers, the Lord testifies that such judgment by believers is nothing but the proclamation of his own sentence, and that whatever they have done on earth is ratified in heaven."[25] This is why the sacrament is a monopoly, the church is sacramental, and the tithe is owed to the church. Rushdoony denies all three conclusions.

Rushdoony had ceased being a Calvinist by the late 1970's. He became a predestinarian Congregational.ist without a local congregation (until he announced his own in 1991), a man who

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25. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion (1559),* IV:XI:2. Edited by Ford Lewis Battles, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), II, p. 1214.

holds a Baptist view of church hierarchy "Another aspect of jurisdiction is this: every church, small or great, is Christ's congregation, not man's. Its loyalty must be to God in Christ, and to His law-word, *not* to a denomination nor a sister church."[26] Late in his career, Rushdoony has begun to issue his Baptistic anathemas against all church hierarchies: "There is in this an implicit and sometimes unconscious heresy. Heresy is a strong word, but nothing less can describe the problem. This authoritarian attempt to control other churches is revelatory of a lack of faith in the triune God and an unseemly faith in the power of man. It assumes the virtual non-existence of the Holy Spirit."[27] Those who hold a hierarchical view of church government are members of a modern Sanhedrin, he says. "We must separate ourselves from modern Sanhedrins."[28]

This is a strange line of theological reasoning from someone who retained the title of minister of the gospel only through his ordination by a tiny Episcopalian denomination (total number of congregations in the denomination: two, both of them located hundreds of miles away from Rushdoony). During his years of ministry in this officially hierarchical denomination ("sanhedrin"?), he refused to attend any local church. He continued to avoid taking the Lord's Supper. He clearly abandoned Calvin's doctrine of the church. This is why Calvinists who started out with him in the early 1970's (or in my case, the early 1960's) have been excluded from his presence. Their view of the church is, in his eyes, anathema, and so are they. He will not tolerate opposition on this point.

Defining the Institutional Church

The church possesses the authority to include and exclude people from the sacraments: "binding" and "loosing." The Bible

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26. Rushdoony, "Nature of the Church," p. 3.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

teaches that the tithe is judicially grounded solely in the covenantal authority of the church, which in turn is grounded on its unique sacramental monopoly We see this connection between tithing and sacramentalism in the first biblical example of tithing: Abraham's tithe to Melchizedek, the priest of Salem, who gave Abraham bread and wine (Gen. 14:18). It was not Melchizedek's office as king of Salem that entitled him to Abraham's tithe; it was his priestly status, which authorized him to distribute the positive sanction of Holy Communion: bread and wine. Rushdoony discusses Melchizedek briefly, but only with respect to the authority of the priesthood generally he does not mention the tithe or Holy Communion.*[29]

What is noticeable about Rushdoony's avoidance of any clear definition of the church is that he has long refused to define the institutional church as the exclusive source of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Instead, he has focused on the church in the broadest sense, i.e., the kingdom of God. He writes in *Law and Society*: "*Second, the church is the City or Kingdom of God.* It is thus more than any church (as we call it) or state can be. The boundaries of God's church include every 'church,' state, school, family, individual, institution, etc. which is under Christ's royal law and rule. But it includes far, far more."[30] Notice that he placed *church* in quotation marks when referring to institutional churches - organizations possessing the authority to excommunicate. He did not do this with the following words: state, school, family, individual, institution. Do these quotation marks indicate an underlying contempt for the authority of local churches?

What, then, of the lawful role of the institutional church? He has not offered a doctrine of the institutional church in well over three decades of writing- and he has written a great deal.

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29. Rushdoony, Law and *Society*, p. 368. He does not mention Melchizedek in Volume 1.

30. *Ibid.*, p. *337.*

This has not been an oversight on his part. He has not publicly faced these two crucial issues: a judicially binding ecclesiastical hierarchy and the uniquely sacramental nature of the church. This is why he prefers to obfuscate the issue by creating a peripheral dichotomy, as we shall see: church as kingdom vs. church as a building. The real issue is this: *the church* as an *oath-bound, covenantal, hierarchical institution with the power to excommunicate those who rebel against church authority.* His words show no trace of any such understanding of the doctrine of the institutional church. "Very clearly, the church in Scripture means the Kingdom of God, not merely the worshipping institution or building. . . . It includes godly men and their possessions, and the earth they subdue in the name of the Lord."[31] He then launches into a chapter titled, "Church Imperialism." It is a long attack on bishops and church hierarchy which he insists are pagan in origin: "ecclesiastical totalitarianism."[32]

Familism

In Chapter '75, "Kingdom Courts," he returns to his fundamental social theme: familism. He has already equated the church with the kingdom of God. "In the Kingdom of God, the family is in history the basic institution."[33] The unique, central social institution is not the institutional church, he insists; rather, it is the family. The family possesses an authoritative court, he insists - indeed, *the* authoritative court in history. In contrast, Rushdoony rarely discusses in *Law and Society the existence* of authoritative church courts except in the context of family courts, which possess superior authority, he says, since the pattern of all government is based on the family. Jethro's hierarchical appeals court in Exodus 18 "utilized an already existing family office, the eldership. The elders are mentioned

.31. *Ibid.*, p. *337.*
32. Ibid., p. *341.*
33. Ibid., p. 343.

before Jethro speaks, in Exodus 18:12. They were heads of families, clans, and tribes."[34] Notice that Rushdoony adopts the term *elder*, used in the New Testament to designate an ecclesiastical office, to identify what he insists was a "family office, the eldership." He goes on: "Scripture gives us the basic ingredients for success: the godly family, and the system of elders."[35] In his chapter, "The Theology of the Family" he writes that "the family is a community the central community . . . The family is the Kingdom of God in miniature when it is a godly family. . . ."[36]

Why should the family be regarded as the "kingdom of God in miniature"? Why not the State? Why not the church? The fact is, there is no "kingdom of God in miniature" -no single institution that uniquely represents God's kingdom. The kingdom of God is the holy realm of God's dominion in history through formal covenanting by His people and their faithfulness in extending this dominion. It is God's civilization.

What Rushdoony insists on is the judicial separation of the New Testament office of elder from the institutional church. "Moreover, there is no reason to restrict Paul's counsel concerning the election of elders (or bishops) to the institution for worship. Paul's *church* is the Kingdom of God, the assembly of the redeemed. His counsel sets forth the requirements for eldership in every realm, church, state, school, etc."[37] With such abroad definition of elder as a ruler in general, the eldership loses its sacramental character. This is Rushdoony's oft-stated goal: the de-sacramentalization of the church.

There are two enormous theological risks inherent in such a view of the church: (1) the attempted de-sacramentalization of society, i.e., secular humanism; (2) the attempted sacramentali-

34. *Ibid.*, p. 368.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 369.
36. Ibid., p. 389.
37. Ibid., pp. 368-69.

zation of either State or family. The fact is, *sacramentalization is an inescapable concept.* It is always a question of which institution becomes elevated to sacramental status. Unfortunately Rushdoony has not understood that sacramentalization is an inescapable concept. He seeks to de-sacramentalize the institutional church. He does not see the Lord's Supper as an ecclesiastical matter, but rather fundamentally a family matter: "The central sacrament of the Christian faith is a family fact, a common sharing of bread and wine from the Lord's Table."[38]

Which institution becomes the prime candidate for sacrament.alization in place of the church? In Rushdoony's theology, there is no possibility of the sacramentalization of the State, but why not the family? Rushdoony has moved dangerously close to this conclusion. In between his assertion of the family as the kingdom of God in miniature and his discussion of the office of elder as "first of all a family office,"[39] this disconcerting statement appears: "Our regeneration establishes a union with the Lord. Our every sexual act is an essential step which makes us a member of the other person."4°

Rushdoony needed to qualify his language covenantally. It is legitimate to describe Christ's love for His church as the love of a husband for his wife, as Paul does in Ephesians 5:23-33, *but not when you begin with a theory of the church as an extension of the family.* Also, not when you personally refuse to take the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, for this refusal raises the issue of a substitute sacrament. Biblically, there is no form of covenant renewal for the family except through membership in the institutional church and participation in the Lord's Supper. But if the uniquely sacramental character of the institutional church is denied, then what is to prevent the substitution of sexual

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38. **R. J. Rushdoony, "The Life of the Church: I Timothy 5:1-2;** *Chalcedon Report* **(Jan.** *1992),* **p.** *15.*

39. Law and Society, p. **389.**

40. *Idem.*

bonding for the Lord's Supper? Rushdoony's seriously confused covenantal categories could easily be used to develop a modern fertility cult religion: *salvation by copulation - the* religion of ancient Canaanite paganism. This very real possibility of constructing a fertility cult theology on the basis of Rushdoony's familism has been the dark underside of Christian Reconstructionism since about 1980. Fortunately for the movement, he has not pressed this implication of his theology, but the threat does exist. What is to prevent some future disciple of Rushdoony's from taking this theological step? Good judgment is a scarce commodity in any new, powerfully articulated intellectual and spiritual movement, for such movements always attract numerous alienated people.[41] When the founders of a movement die, some of these people will grab for power. This is why decentralization is so important: restraining power grabs by decentralizing power and money.

There is no court of earthly appeal beyond the family, Rushdoony says. Here is his defense of patriarchalism - and therefore of *clannism.* "The strength of family government is that the godly family, while having numerous problems and disputes, settles these within its own circle. The family is the institution of strength. To go outside the family is to deny the family and to break it up."[42] This means the *divine* right *of the family* - no earthly appeal beyond it, either to church or State. Although he never mentions the word, this is the divine *right of the patriarch.* He presents this novel thesis as an exegesis of I Corinthians 6:1-8, where Paul enjoins members of the Corinthian *church* not to go before pagan civil courts. In short, he argues for the divine right of the individual against the institutional church (the tithe issue), but not against the hierarchical family.

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41. Peter Gilquist once desaibed this phenomenon to me: "Bright lights attract large bugs." The Fabians, 1880-1900, are a good example of this. Vegetarians, occultists, free love advocates, and other defenders of deviant positions flocked to the early Fabian movement.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 34.5.

The Rhetoric of Contempt

Rushdoony in 1991 delivered a lecture, "Reconstructing the Church," to the Third International Conference on Christian Reconstruction, held in England. He briefly summarized the traditional Protestant and Reformed three-fold definition of the church: orthodox preaching, administering the sacraments, and disciplining. He calls this definition "reductionism."[43] Its limitation, he says, is that it focuses on the institutional church, not the members and their responsibiJities.

He then quotes William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army - a worldwide parachurch organization that closely resembles a church but does not offer the sacraments. Rushdoony favorably cites Booth's description of the late-nineteenth-century church in England as a "mummy factory."[44] This was a clever remark made by a "General" whose organization's publicly recognized symbols are neither the cross of Christ nor a communion cup but instead are: (1) a large bass drum beaten by a lady wearing a funny hat; (2) a black cooking pot and a hand-wrung bell jingling for our cash each Christmas. Let me say it early: the church has never been a mummy factory. This truth was learned by the Pharaoh of the exodus, who never became a mummy. He drowned instead. Local churches may produce some spiritual mummies in certain eras, but the church is God's bride. Rushdoony's rhetoric here is suicidal.

What is extremely significant is this: in his earlier days, Rushdoony had forthrightly affirmed the familiar three-part definition of the church, defending all three points as crucial in the war against humanism. In his 1983 book, *Salvation and Godly Rule*, he included a chapter on "Outlaw Cultures." The essay's internal evidence indicates that it was written in 19'72.[45]

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43. R. J. Rushdoony, "Reconstructing the Church," *Calvinism Today*, II (July 1992), p. 24.

44. *Idem.*

45. **Whenever Rushdoony includes newspaper stations, the date of the latest**

Rushdoony wrote eloquently and to the point that "the marks of a true church, i.e. a body of worshipers, have been defined for centuries as the faithful preaching of the word of God, the faithful administration of the sacraments, and the application of Biblical discipline. Without these things, we are not talking about the church in any historical or theological sense. Instead, a purely humanistic ideal of a denatured church is given us. Such a church is simply a part of the City of Man and an outlaw institution at war with the City of God."[46]

I agree completely with his excellent summary of the marks of a true church and the humanistic implications of any denial of it. The problem is, nineteen years after he wrote it, eight years after he published it, Rushdoony openly repudiated it, and more than repudiated it: became contemptuous of it, ridiculing it. The transformation of his theology during the 1980's was extensive - a fact not widely perceived by his followers or his critics. He replaced his original commitment to the theology

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station is probably close to the time he wrote the essay. Prior to his move to Vallecito, California, in 1975, he threw out his lifetime collection of newspaper dippings. (What I would have paid for this collection had I known in advance he intended to trash it!) The chapter ates a local Southern California newspaper, *The* San *Gabriel Tribune*: June 26, 1972. He had many disciples in the San Gabriel Valley in this period. One of the attendees of his evening lectures in Pasadena (in the San Gabriel Valley), held in the late 1960's, probably sent him the newspaper clipping. There is no footnote reference in the book to anything published later than *1973. So,* I think it is safe to conchsde that the chapter was written no later than the publication date of Volume 1 of *The Institutes:* 1973. That he could write these chapters in the early 1970's, several apparently in late 1972 and early 1973, whale he was completing the manuscript of *The Institutes,* indicates his continuing productivity in 1970-73 period.

Compare the tightly written chapters in Volume 1 with those in Volume 2 *Law and* Society (1982), whose newspaper stations cluster noticeably around 1976-77. These post-1973 chapters are shorter, relying heavily on footnote references to Bible commentaries and religious encyclopedias, with few references to scholarly journals and scholarly monographs: a visible contrast with the footnotes in his pre-1974 books. The theological structure and integrating theme of *Law and Society* are difficult to discern, unlike Volume 1. With 160 brief chapters plus appendixes, it could hardly be otherwise.

46. R. J. Rushdoony, Salvation and *Godly Rule* (Vallecito, California Ross House, 1983), p. 160.

of Calvin and the Protestant reformers with something resembling Anabaptism - and, in some cases, theological liberalism, as we shall see. This transformation centered in his doctrine of the church, but it was not confined to it.

In 1977, Rushdoony adopted a sharp rhetoric regarding amillennial though theologically orthodox churches. In a 57-page book titled, God's *Plan for Victory: The Meaning of Postmillennialism,* he referred to the mythical "Orthodox Pharisees Church" (p. 9), whose initials were OPC, the same as the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Rushdoony had openly begun to burn his ecclesiastical bridges behind him. He has never stopped burning them. This is what I call the Roger Williams syndrome: no church meets his standards. He finds himself worshipping in smaller and smaller settings, always led by himself. Today, it is mainly his family members and employees of Chalcedon who regularly attend his Bible studies - or, as he has called them only since 1991, church worship services.

Having invoked the phrase "mummy factory" with respect to the modern church, he then rallies to the defense of parachurch ministries, referring to "the common and contemptuous use of the term *parachurch*. . . . People who rail against parachurch activities want to limit Christ's work to what they can control."[47]

Well, that all depends. If the particular parachurch ministry deliberately and self-consciously conducts pseudo-worship meetings but without the sacrament of the Lord's Supper during the hours when churches normally conduct worship meetings - the Salvation Army comes to mind, as do Chalcedon's Bible studies (1968-1991) - then the critics have a legitimate complaint. Also, ifa parachurch ministry actively solicits tithes that belong solely to the institutional church, then the critics have a legitimate complaint: opposing the theft of the tithe by interlopers. The issue is to be decided by an appeal to God's revealed word, not

47. R J. Rushdoony, "Editorial," *Chalcedon Report* (April 1993), p. 2.

to rhetoric, i.e., a cavalier dismissal of the institutional church as a "mummy factory."

A Question of Jurisdiction

What Rushdoony has ignored since 1973 should be obvious to anyone with any familiarity with the West's judicial theology and Reformation history Protestantism's definition of the church as an institution was a means of *identifying the church's lawful jurisdiction.* That is to say, the traditional Protestant definition places judicial *boundaries around the church* as an institution - a major goal of the Protestant Reformation, especially the limiting of the sacraments to baptism and the Lord's Supper. Like the U.S. Constitution's limitation of the national government's jurisdiction, this traditional Protestant definition was designed to place boundaries around what the institutional church could rightfully claim as its area of legitimate covenantal authority. It is no more meaningful to criticize the familiar three-fold definition of the institutional church - i.e., that this definition does not describe what church members should do - than it is to criticize the U.S. Constitution because it does not specify what citizens are supposed to do. The judicial issue is this: *What is the institutional church authorized by God to do as His designated monopoly?*

It is therefore misleading - I would call it deliberately, self-consciously subversive - for a theologian of Rushdoony's stature to criticize the traditional Protestant definition of the institutional church on this basis: that it does not tell us what church members are supposed to do. Church members can and should do lots of wonderful things; but they can also avoid doing lots of wonderful things and still remain members in good standing - and not be contemptuously dismissed as mummies. The judicial issue is what is crucial here: defining what the institutional church *must* do in order to be a faithful covenantal organization under God. At this absolutely crucial point in his theology, Rushdoony in 1991 abandoned historic Protestantism's judicial

theology in favor of a definition of the church based on "fellowship" and "good works" - the traditional view of theological liberalism.

Having misled his readers on this point, Rushdoony then goes on to mislead them even more. He says that the church must perform the Great Commission: establish the crown rights of King Jesus, baptize nations, and teach them to obey God's word. Notice: *not one reference to the* sacrament *of the Lord's Supper.* While Matthew 28:18-20 mentions only baptism, the establishment of the church requires the Lord's Supper. Any theologically accurate discussion of the Great Commission must assume the accuracy of the three defining judicial marks of the institutional church. But if you have just ridiculed the institutional church as a mummy factory, your reader may not notice what you are really doing: *removing respect for the judicial authority of the institutional church as the sole legitimate source of the sacraments.* Was this Rushdoony's goal in 1991? I think it was. Rushdoony in mid-1991 had not taken the Lord's Supper, except when lecturing at some distant church, for over two decades.[48]

Conclusion

Central to the doctrine of the church is the theology of the sacraments. Rushdoony has no judicial doctrine of the sacraments, and so he has no judicial doctrine of the church, The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is for him a fellowship meal; so also is the institutional church nothing but a fellowship: a fellowship without formal negative sanctions. Above all, in Rushdoony's ecclesiology, the church cannot place claims over any portion of its members' wallets. This is the alpha and omega - the heart, mind, and soul - of Rushdoony's ecclesiology. He has abandoned Calvin's doctrine of the church - a terrible position for a theologian who comes in the name of Calvinism.

Rushdoony is a major theologian, and more than this, a

48. For details, see Chapter 10.

major social philosopher. But he is a theologian without a coherent doctrine of the church. This gaping hole in his theology has deeply compromised his wing of the Christian Reconstruction movement, and it has been a major burden to those in that rival branch which holds a very high view of the church. We are too often tarred and feathered by our critics on the basis of our supposed hostility to the church.[49]

There can be no success for Christians scholars in history if their work is not appropriated by the institutional church. The church is the earthly agent of theological inheritance. There is no inheritance outside the institutional church. By placing himself in opposition to the historic church's orthodox doctrine of its role in society, and by using pejorative terms such as "mummy factory" to describe church members, Rushdoony has transferred his intellectual legacy to those of us in the movement who seek to extend this legacy into and through the church.

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49. The classic example is the essay by John R. Muether, a librarian at Reformed Theological Seminary "The Theonomic Attraction," in *Theonomy: A Reformed Critique*, edited by William S. Barker and W. Robert Godfrey (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Academie, 1990). For my response, see Gary North, Westminster's *Confession: The Abandonment of Van Til's Legacy* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1991), pp. 288-92.

8

THE LEGAL BASIS OF THE TITHE

And the priest the son of Aaron shall be with the Levites, when *the Levites take tithes: and the Levites shun bring up the tithe of the tithes unto the house of our God, to the chambers, into the treasure house. For the* children *of Israel* and *the children of Levi shall bring the offering of the corn, of the new wine,* and *the oil, unto the chambers, where are the vessels of the sanctuary,* and *the priests that minister, and the porters,* and *the singers: and we will not forsake the house of our God (Neh. 10:38-39).*

The judicial foundation of the tithe is not its supposedly primary role as an aspect of dominion; it is rather based on *the church's covenantal role as the monopolistic guardian of the sacraments,* which establishes its possession of the keys of the kingdom. In this sense, the church's authority is the same as the Levites' authority under the Mosaic covenant: guardian of the holy. Its ultimate means of discipline is excommunication: separating former members from the communion table. There is no church authority apart from the sacraments. *Remove respect for the* sacraments, and *you thereby remove respect for church discipline.* This has been the pattern of modern fundamentalism, and Rushdoony is in this regard a dedicated fundamentalist, not a Calvinist. Calvinism is not merely a belief in predestination. Luther believed in predestination *(The* Bondage *of the Will),* but

he was surely not a Calvinist. Luther and Calvin divided over the issue of the Lord's Supper: a sacramental issue. Calvin devoted the longest section of his Institutes to a study of the church: Book IV. Break with Calvin on his doctrine of the church, and you have broken with Calvin. This is what Rushdoony has done. This is a major reason why Rushdoony's theology is rejected without a fair hearing by pastors and theologians within the Calvinist world: they see him for what he is, an ecclesiastical independent who happens to believe in predestination and infant baptism.

Dominion and Subordination

The requirement to exercise dominion is a requirement to seek a profit; on this point, see Jesus' parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30), which immediately precedes His description of the final judgment. The tithe is paid out of the net increase of our efforts. In shore *no increase = no tithe.* Individuals and families produce net increases; churches, at best, invest excess finds in profit-seeking, non-church endeavors. The family, not the church, is the primary agency of dominion, and because of this, the family is not granted any economic entitlement by God. The church is entitled to the tithe; non-church agencies are not. Dominion has nothing to do judicially with the God-given authority to collect the tithe. Dominion does have something to do with *paying* the tithe, however: a public acknowledgment of one's institutional subordination to God's church.

That Rushdoony can speak of tithing and dominion as judicially linked, and then announce that the church is not a productive institution, points to his anti-ecclesiastical conclusion: a denial that the institutional church has a legitimate claim on the tithe. But the fundamental topic is not *tithing and dominion.* Rather it is tithing and *subordination.* When we get this clear, and only then, should we begin to consider the next topic, *subordina-*

tion and *dominion*.[1] Only to the degree that Christians are subordinate to God through their membership in His institutional church are they fully empowered by God to extend His comprehensive dominion. Subordination (point two of the biblical covenant model) precedes dominion (point three). Rushdoony has denied this covenantal reality in his writings and his actions since 1974.

Social Semites vs. Judicial Sanctions

Rushdoony defends his view by separating the Levites' sacramental function from their cultural and social functions. He argues that the Levites performed many social services, "providing godly education, music, welfare, and necessary godly assistance to civil authorities."2 Thus, Rushdoony concludes, it was their provision of these social services that justified their collection of the tithe. They did not possess a legal claim on the tithe, Rushdoony argues. If they failed to provide these cultural services, Israelite church members had an obligation to cut them off financially. They still do, he insists.

It is worth noting that this view of church authority is shared by the modern American liberal. The modern liberal's acceptance of the idea of tax exemption is based on his theory of useful social services. The liberal allows the State to grant tax exemption to churches on the same basis that it grants tax exemption to non-profit, government-chartered charitable foundations such as Chalcedon. The liberal categorically rejects any suggestion that the Trinitarian church is automatically tax-immune, based on its separate covenantal status as a God-ordained government- a government that possesses the authority to impose judicial sanctions. Analogously Rushdoony regards

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1. Gary North, "Dominion Through Subordination," *Biblical Economics Today*, XV (Aug./Sept. 1993).

2. Rushdoony, "The Foundation of Christian Reconstruction," in *Tithing and Dominion*, p. 9.

the church as having no lawful claim to Christians' tithes based on its separate covenantal status as a God-ordained government that possesses the authority to impose judicial sanctions. In his theology, the church has no legal claim on members' money greater than their desire to support it because of the social services it provides them. In short, *Rushdoony's theology of the church's* claim *on the tithe is the same as the liberal's theology of the church's claim to tax exemption.* They both ask the church the same question: "What have you done for society lately?"

"This tithe belongs to God, not to the church, nor to the producer."[3] This observation is irrelevant for any discussion of the tithe. Of course the tithe belongs to God; everything belongs to God (Ps. 50:10). The question is this: What *institution* possesses the God-given monopolistic authority to collect the tithe from covenant-keepers? That is, which *institution* possesses the God-given authority and responsibility to pronounce God's negative sanctions against someone who refuses to pay? The biblical answer is obvious: the church. Rushdoony disagrees with this answer. He wants to remove from the institutional church any legal claim to the tithe.

He raises the spurious issue of an apostate church in order to destroy the legal claim of all churches: "It cannot be given to an apostate church without being given thereby against God, not to Him."4 This is quite true; it is therefore an argument for a person to leave an apostate church. In fact, the best indicator to a church member that he should transfer his membership to another church is that he can no longer in good conscience pay the tithe to the church that now possesses lawful authority over him. The individual has the God-given authority and responsibility to decide which church to join; he does not have the authority to decide not to tithe to this church. But in a world

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3. Rushdoony, "Tithing and Christian Reconstruction," *Tithing and Dominion,* p. 3.

4. *Idem.*

with millions of Christians in rebellion against church authority, Rushdoony's doctrine of church and tithe finds supporters.

Church and Kingdom

Rushdoony argues that the individual has the God-given authority to decide where his tithe money should go. As a statement of the God-delegated authority of the believer, this is true, but only in a very specific and limited way: his authority to transfer his membership to another congregation. But Rushdoony is not talking about this form of conscience-based authority before God. The decision Rushdoony speaks of is a decision made not on the basis of where the Christian chooses to have his local church membership, but rather on the basis of the Christian's assessment of the broadly defined cultural performance of the church's officers. "The priests and Levites, to whom it [the tithe] was originally given, had charge of religion, education, and various other functions."[5] The tithe, he says, must constitute the financing of every aspect of Christian reconstruction, not just the preaching of the word and the administration of the sacraments: "But the law of the tithe makes clear it is God's money and must go to God's causes, to Christian worship, education, outreach, and reconstruction. . . . And the tithe must bear the whole burden of Christian reconstruction."[6] (This is clearly incorrect the tithe is only one-tenth of one's net increase. Everything a person has is supposed to be devoted to Christian reconstruction: heart, mind, soul, and capital.) In short, "What we must do is, *first*, to tithe, and, *second*, to allocate our tithe to godly agencies. Godly agencies means far more than the church.'" The Levites provided education, music, and so forth. "The realm of the godly, of the Christian, is broader than the church. To limit Christ's realm to the church is not

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5. *Idem.*
6. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
7. Rushdoony, "The Foundation of Christian Reconstruction: ibid., p. 9.

Biblical; it is pietism, a surrender of Christ's kingship over the world. The purpose of the tithe must be to establish that king-Ship."*

It is clear why Rushdoony refuses to cite the texts in Numbers which established the legal basis of the claim of the Levites to the tithe. These passages explicitly link the tithe and the office of ecclesiastical guardian. It was not the Levites' social services that entitled them to the tithe; it was their boundary service as the temple's agents of execution: guardians of what was sacramentally holy.

Rushdoony makes a valid Protestant point: the kingdom of Christ is larger than the institutional church. As he says, limiting the kingdom to the institutional church is indeed the essence of pietism. But he has created great confusion in his own mind and his followers' minds by equating the *tithe* and *charitable giving to the broader kingdom.* This view of the tithe is equally pietistic: it limits the financing of the kingdom. The kingdom of Christ in history is comprehensive. It must be extended by every bit of productivity at the disposal of covenant-keepers.[9] When a Christian makes a profit or earns a wage, all of this is to be earmarked for extending the kingdom of Christ, broadly defined: education, entertainment, the arts, leisure, capital formation, etc.

The kingdom of Christ is *not* extended primarily by charitable institutions. The kingdom of Christ is extended through dominion, and this is financed by Christians' net productivity. Rushdoony understands this "net productivity" principle with respect to taxation: the State may not lawfully tax capital, only net income. This is why he has long opposed the property tax as anti-Christian.[10] But he does not acknowledge that this

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8. Idem.

9. **Through common grace, it is extended even by covenant-breakers. North,** *Dominion and Common Grace.*

10. **He wrote in 1967: "The property tax came in very slowly, and it appeared first in New England, coinciding with the spread of Deism and Unitarianism, as well**

same principle also applies to the tithe. Neither tithes nor taxes are the basis of dominion: net productivity is. That is, ***growth is the basis of dominion.*** Where there is no doctrine of progressive dominion in history, there is no doctrine of economic growth.[11] This growth of God's kingdom comes primarily through two processes: (1) the confiscation of Satan's assets through God's adoption of Satan's human disciples; (2) the economic growth enjoyed by God's human disciples, which enables them to redeem the world through purchase.[12]

The kingdom of Christ, broadly defined, must be equated with the *total* efforts of covenant-keepers: heart, mind, and soul. What is my conclusion? First, all of the tithe goes to the local church. Second, gifts and offerings can go to other charities. Third, the kingdom of Christ is extended by total productivity including economic productivity. Fourth, total economic productivity, not charity, is the primary economic means of extending God's kingdom in history. This is why God promises long-term economic growth to covenant-keeping societies (Deut. 28:1-14). More wealth per capita should come from covenant-keeping men than is used up by them.[13] Covenant-keepers should leave a positive economic legacy to their grandchildren.*[14] "A good man leaveth an inheritance to his child-

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as atheism. Such anti-Christian men saw the state as man's savior, and as a result they favored placing more and more power in the hands of the state. The South was the last area to accept the property tax, and it was largely forced on the South by post-Civil War Reconstruction." When imposed before the Civil War, the property tax was limited to the county, where "only owners of real property could vote on the county level." Rushdoony, *Chalcedon Newsletter* #24 (Sept. 1967).

11. Gary North, *Is the World Running Down? Crisis in the Christian Worldview* ('Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1988).

12. There is a third way military conquest. But this method of dominion is not primary It is lawful only when it is the result of successful defensive campaigns that produce comprehensive victory in wars launched by God's enemies.

13. E. Calvin Beisner, *Prospects for Growth: A Biblical Vii of Population, Resources, and the Future* (Westchester, Illinois Crossway 1990).

14. This is one reason why a Christian should instruct his heirs not to put him on a life-support system once two physicians say that it is unlikely that he will recov-

ren's children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just" (Prov. 13:22).

Sovereignty

If you want to find out where sovereignty lies in any social system or social theory, you must do two things: (1) identify the sacraments; (2) follow the money. [15] In Rushdoony's theology, the kingdom of God is based on a compact between God and the individual Christian. The institutional church is without covenantal authority in this God-and-man compact. Church officers must take whatever they receive from church members and be thankful to the donors for whatever this is. Rushdoony's ecclesiology allows church officers no legitimate institutional sanctions to impose on those members who send all or a portion of their tithe money elsewhere.

The judicial question surrounding the tithe is this: Who *lawfully* retain-s sovereign *control over the allocation of the tithe?* 'Rushdoony's answer: the individual Christian, not the officers of the church. "The Christian who tithes, and sees that his tithe goes to godly causes, is engaged in true social reconstruction. By his tithe money and his activity he makes possible the development of Christian churches, schools, colleges, welfare agencies, and other necessary social functions."[16] (And, he might have added, non-profit educational foundations, but this would have appeared self-serving.) He does not mean that Christians retain ultimate control over the allocation of their tithes by choosing which local congregation to join; rather, they retain immediate allocational authority in their capacity as church

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er. The capital of most estates in the U.S. is used up in the last six months of an aged person's life. It is better to die in bed at home six months early and leave capital behind. Christians must buy back the world, generation by generation. This requires a growing supply of capital.

15. North, *Political Polytheism,* **p. 553.**

16. Rushdoony, "Foundation of Christian Reconstruction," *Tithing* **and Dominion, pp. 8-9.**

members or even as non-church members.

If this were true, then Rushdoony might ask: What if the Christian can locate no agency that meets his standards of social action? Can the Christian then lawfully tithe to himself in order to fund the doing of his own good deeds? Why not? More to the point, can he set up his own church and tithe to it? As of 1991, Rushdoony apparently believes that this is the case. He claims that Chalcedon has somehow become a church. (Then what are the members of what was formerly its Board of Trustees: Ruling elders? There was never any restriction against women serving on Chalcedon's Board of Trustees; Rushdoony's wife Dorothy so served when I was a Trustee in the 1970's. Can women now become elders in his new church? Or have Chalcedon's By-Laws been rewritten to exclude women?)

I have argued that tithe money can and should go to all kinds of charitable services, but it is church officers who are invested with the God-given authority to decide which of these endeavors to support and in what proportional' Rushdoony asserts that it is the tithe-payer's God-given authority to make these decisions. "Since the tithe is 'holy unto the Lord', it is our duty as tithers to judge that church, mission group, or Christian agency which is most clearly 'holy unto the Lord'."[18] Rushdoony does not define the holiness of the recipient organizations as *legal holiness* - a formal, judicial, covenantal, setting apart by God through His written revelation - but rather as *social holiness, to be judged by individual tithers.* In Rushdoony's ecclesiology, the church cannot bring judgment against individuals who refuse to transfer to the church ten percent of their net income; on the contrary they bring judgment against the church by withholding these funds and sending them elsewhere, such as to a non-profit, Federally tax-exempt, incorpo-

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17. Because churches have refused to do this, they have forfeited enormous influence and authority in modern culture. See Gary North, "Royal Priests, Tin Gups in Hand," *Biblical Economics Today*, **XIV (June/July 1992).**

18. Rushdoony, "To Whom Do We Tithe?" *Tithing and Dominion*, **p. 30.**

rated educational foundation located in central California.

Here is where the rubber of Rushdoony's anti-ecclesiastical worldview[19] meets the covens.rd road. The primary issue here is *authority over money*. In Rushdoony's published theology, lawful authority over the distribution of the tithe lodges in the individual Christian. He who pays the piper calls the tune, and the piper-payer in Rushdoony's theology of the tithe is the individual Christian. Rushdoony's theory of the proper financing of the kingdom of God is therefore individualistic, despite his affirmations to the contrary

High Priest and *King of Kings*

The New Testament affirms that Jesus Christ is both King of kings and High Priest. His absolute sovereignty is revealed institutionally in history through the existence of biblically compulsory payments to two covenantal institutions: State and church. The State has a lawful claim on a portion- under ten percent (I Sam. 8:15, 17) -of the productivity of those under its jurisdiction. Why? Because the civil magistrate is a minister of God (Rem. 13:4). The church has a legal claim on ten percent of its members' net income. Why? Because church officers are ministers of God. *In both cases, the officers' ministerial function is what identifies these two institutions as sovereign.* Compulsory taxes go to the kingly institution; members' compulsory tithes go to the priestly institution. Both institutions are covenantal. Both are entitled to a portion of our income. A person can no more legitimately allocate his tithe than he can legitimately allocate his taxes. He does not have the authority to do so; in both cases, he is under the threat of institutional sanctions, meaning he is under the threat of God's sanctions.

It is a major weakness of Rushdoony's social theory that he fails to identify anywhere in his writings the judicial and econom-

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19. Pre-1991. Today I do not know what he believes. What he has written, however, is clear.

ic distinctions between Christ as High Priest and Christ as King of kings. The Bible teaches clearly that the tithe is mandatory It goes to the church, and *only to the church.* Why? Because Jesus Christ is the high priest after the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 7). In Rushdoony's social theory, Christ's office as High Priest has no institutional sanctions.

In one limited sense, he is correct. The church technically cannot excommunicate people who, like Rushdoony, refuse to join a local congregation or take the Lord's Supper. But the church does not need to bring formal sanctions against those who are self-excommunicated.[20] *Self-excommunication is excommunication.* It is sufficient that the church publicly identify self-excommunicated people as excommunicates. (Rarely does any local church do this.) Church officers who serve the Lord's Supper to such self-excommunicated individuals have denied their holy offices as guardians of the sacraments. It is not surprising that a loose view of the sacraments is normally accompanied by a loose view of the church and a loose view of the tithe.

The Chalcedon Foundation

Rushdoony for decades has paid his tithe to his own educational foundation, Chalcedon. He did not belong to any local church until late 1991, when he declared Chalcedon a church. Problem: his published theology of the tithe rests on a fundamental confusion between the sacramental function of the church and its educational and nurturing function. His published theology of the tithe does not acknowledge the judicial requirement of the individual Christian to finance the sacramental aspect of the kingdom by means of his tithe, and the dominion and kingly aspects by means of voluntary donations

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20. I **am not referring to Rushdoony's 1991 anointing of Chalcedon as a church. See Chapter 10, below subsection on "Chalcedon's Overnight Metamorphosis in Late 1991." I am speaking of his published theology and two-decade absence from a local church and its communion table.**

above the tithe to non-ecclesiastical organizations.

Prior to 1991, Chalcedon, like the Institute for Christian Economics, was kingly rather than priestly in its calling.[21] Neither organization is entitled to any portion of the tithe[22] except at the discretion of churches that collect tithes and then donate the money to either organization. (As the saying goes, "Don't hold your breath.") The donor owes his local church his tithe; he does not possess the authority to allocate his tithe money (priestly sacramental money) to other organizations. Chalcedon, ICE, and all other parachurch and educational ministries owe it to their supporters to warn them never to send in donations unless they first tithe to a local church.[23] This limitation would keep most of them quite tiny if they are presently financed by men's tithes, a practice which would then cease. Rushdoony in the late 1970's invented a theology of the tithe that justified Chalcedon's collection of part or all of Christians' tithes. This self-interested theological confusion undermined his theology of the kingship of Christ and the dominion covenant.

Conclusion

The legal basis of the church's monopolistic right to collect the tithe from its members is the sacramental function of the church. The tithe and the sacraments are linked judicially. The issue is not economic service by the church, or any other organization; the issue is the sacramental basis of the tithe.

Rushdoony's theology of the tithe rests on an economic

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21. The ICE is legally chartered as a charitable trust, not a foundation.

22. Here I speak of non-members, now that Chalcedon has been designated by Rushdoony as a church. But Chalcedon Church, if it in fact is a lawful church, is not entitled biblically to the tithe money of non-members. It, too, must rely on non-members' gifts above the tithe.

23. On this point, see my response to John R. Muether in Gary North, *Westminster's Confession: The Abandonment of Van Til's Legacy* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1991), pp. 289-92.

distinction within the calling of the Levites: sacraments vs. social works. The Mosaic tithe, he says, was owed primarily because of the socially important services that were performed by the Levites. Only the one percent going to the priests directly constituted the sacramental portion; nine percent went for social services. "Only a handful of Levites were engaged in temple service, as against the vast numbers whose work was instruction (Deut. 33:10)."[24] Note: his focus is on instruction. This is consistent. Chalcedon until 1991 was a strictly non-profit, government-chartered educational institution.[25]

He has made his views clear, that "nowhere in Scripture is man or the church given the power to require or enforce tithing."[26] On this weak theological reed he has built his theology since 1979. (Ironically, it was my tithe to my church that was used to finance the publication of *Tithing and Dominion.)*

24. Rushdoony, *Law* and *Society*, p. 127.
25. See Chapter 10.
26. Rushdoony, "The Nature of the Church," Calvinism *Today* (Oct. 1991), p. 3.

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SACRAMENTS OR SOCIAL GOSPEL?

Will **a man** *rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there maybe meat in mine house,* and prove *me* now *herewith, saith the* LORD *of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And Z will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your* ground; neither *shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the* LORD *of hosts. And all nations shall* call you *blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the* LORD *of hosts (Mal. 3:8-12).*

The Bible does not speak of multiple storehouses of the tithe; it speaks of only one storehouse. If a society violates this single storehouse principle of the mandatory tithe, it brings itself under God's negative corporate sanctions: "cursed with a curse." If it obeys this principle, it gains God's positive corporate sanctions: "and all nations shall call you blessed."

Note carefully that the word is storehouse (singular), not storehouses (plural). But this is not how Rushdoony has summarized the text: "The tithe was given to the Levites, who stored the animals and grain in storehouses (Mal. 3:10) until they could either be used or sold. It is a silly and self-serving

modernism which leads some clergymen to insist that the *storehouse is* the church.. . . The Levites had very broad functions in Israel: they were the teachers (Deut. 33:10), the musicians, the judges at times, the medical authorities and more; superintending foods and their cleanliness was a part of their duty."* But the issue is not, in Rushdoony's phrase, "self-serving modernism." The *issue is the actual text of Scripture.* Men must not become self-serving when they read the text of Scripture - liberals or conservatives. The text speaks of a storehouse: singular.

Was Calvin a Modernist?

What Rushdoony always ignores in this connection is that the Levites protected the place of sacrifice. While they did indeed provide legal advice and other services, the office of Levite was defined in connection to the tithe as a judicial office: guardian of the temple. He then calls *self-serving* and *modernist all those* theologians who have identified the storehouse with the church. the receptacle of the tithe. Over two decades of sending his own tithe to Chalcedon is presumably not self-serving, in his opinion. But those who say that the tithe belongs only to the local church are modernists and pietists, he insists. You know modernists such as John Calvin, who commented on Malachi 3:10 by describing any withholding of the tithe from the priests as a form of sacrilege: "They had been sufficiently proved guilty of rapacity in withholding the tenths and the oblations; as then the sacrilege was well known, the Prophet now passes judgment, as they say, according to what is usually done when the criminal is condemned, and the cause is decided, so that he who has been defrauded recovers his right. . . . *Bring,* he says, to *the repository* (for this is the same as the house of the treasury, or of provisions) *all the tenths,* or the whole . tenths. We hence learn that they had not withholder the whole

1. Rushdoony, "The Tithe in Scripture," *Tithing* and *Dominion* (Fairfax, Virginia: Thoburn Press, 1979), p. 17.

of the tenths from the priests, but that they fraudulently brought the half, or retained as much as they could; for it was not without reason that he said, *Bring all,* or the whole."2

Calvin understood exactly what crime against God was involved in withholding the full ten percent from the Levites: *sacrilege.* Paying the priests their tenth of the tithe was not sufficient to avoid the crime of sacrilege, Calvin said. They had to pay the entire remaining nine-tenths to the Levites. Sacrilege is an attack on God's sacramental institution, the church - an attack on the sacraments. Calvin also understood clearly that the tithe went to the Levites and priests because of their judicial offices as guardians and administrators of the sacraments. This non-optional economic entitlement was grounded judicially in the sacraments, and *only* in the sacraments. Any other duties performed by the Levites and priests were incidental to their administration of the sacraments. Calvin never referred to these supplemental social activities. Rushdoony, in sharp contrast, categorically denies any sacramental authority to the church. He has abandoned the theology of Calvin and the Puritans in the name of Calvin and the Puritans. *Rushdoony* has *moved from* Calvinism *to Anabaptism.* Nowhere is this clearer than in his published view of the tithe.

Rushdoony's Social Gospel

We can see Rushdoony's break with Calvinism in his false distinction between the Levites' task as educators and the place of sacrifice, the sanctuary. "Education was one of the functions of the Levites (not of the sanctuary)."[3] To prove this supposed separation of religious education from the sanctuary in the Levitical calling, he would have to identify the judicial basis of

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2. John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Twelve* Minor *Prophets,* 5 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, [1559] 1979), V, p. 588.

3. R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Nutley, New Jersey Craig Press, 1973), p. 55.

the Levites' separation from the other tribes in terms of their provision of social services. This cannot be done textually. Numbers 18 is clear, as we have seen: *the separation of the Levites from the other tribes was based on their* unique *access to the temple and its sacrifices.* This separation was based on a *geographical boundary - legal* access to the tabernacle/temple- and not on their provision of social services, especially educational services.

Is the education of children lawfully a function of the church, the State, or the family? Rushdoony has always denied the legitimacy of education by the State, but he has been ambivalent regarding the educational authority of church and family. "The Christian school is a manifestation of the visible church, and at the same time, an extension of the home."4 But which one possesses institutional sovereignty? *Economical", the* answer is clear: the agency that finds education. What about *judicially?* On this point, Rushdoony has been ambivalent. But this much is clear: if education was the function of the Levites, and this function was separate from the sanctuary (i.e., the sacrifices), as he insists was the case, then the Levites as educators were under the authority of families if families paid for education by allocating their tithes. This is exactly what Rushdoony's theology of the tithe concludes. This means that *pastors as Levite-educators (i.e., as tithe-receivers) are under the authority of* families. Since he denies the sacramental character of the church, he strips the church of all covenantal authority. It cannot impose sanctions for non-payment of tithes. Once again, we are back to familism-clannism.

Rushdoony's voluntaristic view of the tithe is shared by most of the modern church and most of its members, which is why the modern church is impotent, judicially and economically. This is why statism has visibly triumphed in our day. Rushdoony admits this when he writes that "the abolition of the tithe

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4. Rushdoony, *Intellectual Schizophrenia Culture,Crisis and Education* **(Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1961), p. 42.**

has opened the way for truly oppressive taxation by the state in order to assume the social responsibilities once maintained by tithe money."[5] But he errs once again: the fundamental issue is not money; it is the sacramental character of the church. *The fundamental issue is the judicial basis of the local church's claim on ten percent of the net* productivity *of its members. This* claim *is* sacramental-judicial, not social-economic.

Rushdoony's denial of the sacramental character of the church removes the judicial (covenantal) character of the Lord's Supper. This view denies that any divine sanctions are attached to the sacraments. In this sense, he has adopted (at best) the nominalist view of the sacraments: the Lord's Supper as a mere remembrance. At best, Rushdoony is a Zwinglian, not a Calvinist, in his view of the sacraments. His view also denies the legitimacy of church discipline: the priestly announcement of God's sanctions.

Rushdoony always discusses the role of the church as a social agency, openly denying its sacramental character He is wrong, and this single error has produced more harm for the Christian Reconstruction movement than anything else in his writings. He has no respect for the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and it shows. *Without covenantal sanctions* in *history, there could be no covenant: church (keys), State (sword), or family (rod).* He has stripped the institutional church of her lawful negative sanction - excommunication - by stripping divine sanctions from the Lord's Supper. He wrote himself out of the church, 1970-1991, in order to justify his self-excommunication from the church.

The Case of the Missing Theology

In this respect, Rushdoony has become a consistent defender of a Social Gospel. His pietist critics have recognized this, although their view of the tithe is rarely better than his, and their

5. Rushdoony, *Institutes*, p. 57.

view of the sacraments is only slightly better. Rushdoony's theology does defend gospel preaching as a function of the church, thereby avoiding the liberal version of the social gospel. But the institutional church has three aspects: the preaching of the gospel, the administration of the sacraments, and the authority to police access to the sacraments, i.e., church discipline (the keys of the kingdom). One searches in vain in Rushdoony's writings for even one page devoted to a theological exposition of the discipline of the church. He steadfastly refuses to discuss the meaning of the keys of the kingdom. This is why he has never published so much as a chapter on the doctrine of the church: sacraments, tithe, and discipline.

Rushdoony's view of the institutional church is not even remotely Reformed. He uses Calvinist phrases, but he long ago abandoned Book IV of Calvin's *Institutes.* His ecclesiology is not a little bit wrong; it is completely wrong. It is not accidental that he, has refused to write a book on the doctrine of the church, nor has an issue of *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction* been devoted to this topic. This is one reason - I believe the primary reason - why he has never completed his long-promised systematic theology. He holds an unorthodox doctrine of the church, and he cannot publish a section on ecclesiology without exposing himself to widespread criticism from orthodox theologians, not to mention Chalcedon's donors. Dispensationalist Lewis Sperry Chafer had a similar problem in his Systematic *Theology (1948), so* he muddled his sections on the church; Rushdoony, in contrast, refuses to write a systematic theology. To write it, he would have to present a theological defense of his own refusal to take communion or attend weekly church services for over two decades. His published views of the sacraments, regular church attendance, and tithing are an integrated whole. He believes that all three are voluntary actions. His published bits and pieces of the doctrine of the church reveal his radical individualism. His published doctrine of the church is libertarian.

The Fatal Flaw in Rushdoony's Theology

Rushdoony began to develop the rudiments of his theology of the tithe in the late 1960's, after Chalcedon had received its tax-exempt status from the U.S. Internal Revenue Service. In *The Institutes of Biblical Law (1973),* he writes: "Moreover, the modern church calls for tithing to the church, an erroneous view which cuts off education, health, welfare, and much else from the tithe."[6] He understands that his view of the tithe transfers power to the members, who are supposedly under no judicial requirement to pay their tithes to the church: "If the church collects the tax, the church rules society; if the state collects the tax, the state rules society. If, however, the people of God administer the tithe to godly agencies, then God's rule prevails in that social order.'" The central legal issue is *administration: Who* has the God-given authority to distribute the tithe? The Bible is clear: the church. Rushdoony is equally clear: the tithe-payer.

Notice Rushdoony's implicit assumption: because God says that He is entitled to a tithe, a godly society is determined economically by the agent who distributes it. The biblical fact is very different the judicial status of a godly society is determined *covenantally* in terms of which agency collects and then distributes the tithe, for this identifies which god rules in society by which representatives. A Christian society is identified biblically by the widespread presence of churches that collect the tithe, i.e., churches that possess and exercise their God-given authority to impose negative sanctions against members who refuse to pay the tithe. God blesses covenantally faithful societies, and tithing to God's church is a primary mark of covenantal faithfulness. Cause and effect move from law (boundaries) to sanctions (blessings and cursings). But the judicial issue is God's delegated authority Who owes what to whom? In short, who

6. *Ibid.,* p. 513.
7. *Ibid.,* p. 514.

lawfully holds the hammer? Is the fundamental authority of the kingdom of God primarily economic, with Christian individuals holding the hammer, or is it primarily judicial, with church officers holding it?

Compulsory Support

With respect to civil government, Christians have always acknowledged that individuals owe taxes to the State. Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, Jesus said (Matt. 22:21). The individual does not lawfully allocate how his taxes will be spent; the State's officers do.

With respect to the family, Christians have always acknowledged: Children owe support to parents. This is not optional. Even priests must pay, Jesus said. No priest can escape this obligation by crying, "corban," as if this obligation were a voluntary gift (Mark 7:11-13). (*Corban* is the Hebrew word used in Leviticus 2:1 to describe the meat [meal] offering, i.e., the second sacrifice.)

Then what about the church? Does the tithe-payer have the God-given authority to decide to pay the tithe to any organization other than the institutional church? No. Paying the tithe to the institutional church is each church member's legal obligation before God. In all three covenantal institutions, paying money is not a matter of choice; it is a matter of legal obligation. The allocation of the money so collected is not the decision of those who pay.

Rushdoony's Libertarianism

Rushdoony has misidentified this authority structure. In his view, economics, not God's covenantal law of the church, is determinative: a godly society, he says, is financed by the tithe. Again, his libertarian presuppositions are obvious. He was not exaggerating when he announced on national television in

1987: "I'm close to being a libertarian. . . ."[8] As he sees it, the success or failure of God's non-profit kingdom institutions will be determined by God's sovereignty by means of the decisions of individual Christians regarding where to pay their tithes - decisions made without any legitimate threat of institutional sanctions from the recipients. Sanctions - positive or negative - are imposed by individual Christians on the recipient institutions; the institutions have no legitimate negative sanctions of their own. The institutional church is described by Rushdoony as being little more than an income-seeking business that competes for the consumers' money. This view of church financing removes the power of the keys from the church. This conclusion is completely consistent with Rushdoony's pre-1991 view of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper: a rite without covenantal sanctions.

Rushdoony's libertarianism and individualism are both visible in his view of the tithe. On this topic, Rushdoony is an economic determinist. He says, in effect: "He who controls the allocation of the tithe controls Christian society. The individual Christian lawfully controls the allocation of the tithe, so he should control Christian society. The institutional church has no lawful authority to compel such payment by any threat of sanctions. Hence, the individual is judicially *autonomous* in the allocation of the tithe. Only God can impose negative sanctions against him." This is the libertarian theology known as *the* divine *right of the individual.* Divine-right theology always rests on a presupposition that someone - the king, the legislature, or the individual - is beyond legitimate institutional sanctions in history. Rushdoony's radical individualism is clearly seen here. He has rejected covenant theology in favor of Anabaptist theology.

Rushdoony has written repeatedly that individualism always leads to statism. The humanist State can compel payment of

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8. **Bill Meyers, "God and Politics: On Earth as It Is in Heaven," Public Affairs Television (1987), p. 5.**

taxes, can demand obedience, and therefore it possesses divine rights. That is, the humanist State claims autonomy from (and therefore authority over) every rival institution. To challenge such a view of the State, there has to be an appeal to another authority with authority that is equal to the State's in many areas and superiority to it regarding the collection of funds from its members. In short, the authority of the church to collect tithes from its voting members prior to the tax collector's extraction of money from church members must be affirmed in civil law. The church must have legal priority over the State's authority in the involuntary collection of money.[9] Only if some other covenantal institution possesses comparable authority over its members' money can we identify an agency with comparable covenantal authority.

Rushdoony's theology of the tithe denies such authority to the church. This leaves only the family as a rival covenantal institution. But, biblically speaking, the family possesses neither the sword nor the keys of the kingdom. *This is the fatal flaw of Rushdoony's social theory.* Rushdoony's anti-ecclesiastical theology can offer only two futile alternatives to the divine right of the State: radical individualism or patriarchalism-clannism. The State historically has overcome both of these alternatives, from ancient Greece to the present.

Conclusion

By rejecting a sacramental defense of both the church and the tithe, Rushdoony has converted his theology into a conservative version of the social gospel. The legitimacy of the church, manifested in Rushdoony's ecclesiology only by its ability to persuade church members to donate money to it, is grounded

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9. This is **acknowledged implicitly judicially in the U.S. tax code. The taxpayer is allowed to deduct tithes and offerings from his gross income before estimating what he owes to the State. He pays income taxes only on the money that remains after charitable giving. This is not true in most European countries, where the State has primary claim on income. The church may receive a portion of what remains.**

on the good deeds that churches perform in society. 'his is the U.S. government's view of non-profit status, the liberal's only reason for allowing the church to escape the tax man.

Rushdoony's view of the church is libertarian. He views the church strictly as a voluntary society. In his view, the church is not founded on a self-valedictory oath before God, for such an oath would transfer judicial authority to church officers as God's monopolistic agents. They could then lawfully compel payment of the tithe by members.

His view of church authority creates a divine right of the individual church member. The individual alone supposedly is God's designated agent who lawfully controls the distribution of the tithe rather than the church's ordained authorities. Beyond him there is no ecclesiastical appeal.

The alternative to a Christian view of society that places the church covenant at the center of its social theory" is either a statist view of society or a patriarchal view of society. Rushdoony, faithful to an Armenian heritage that did not survive the second generation of immigrants- his generation- has chosen the latter view. Patriarchalism cannot survive for even three generations in a society that prohibits arranged marriages and allows easy divorce.

It also cannot survive the biblical view of marriage. It was Roman law, with its intense patriarchalism, that kept the clans alive. The English common law heritage was, from the twelfth century onward, utterly hostile to the revived Roman law's view of marriage and family authority, which steadily gained new respect and power on the Continent.[10] That Rushdoony should be regarded as soft on divorce, which in some cases he is,[11] is ironic: nothing undermines a patriarchal society - the family as sacramental - faster than the widespread acceptance

10. Alan Macfarlane, *Marriage and Love in England: Modes of Reproduction* 1300-1840 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), ch. 7: "Who Controls the Marriage Decision?"

11. See Chapter 10. "

of divorce on demand. His own sad experience with his first marriage, like the similar experiences of his brother and his sister, should have warned him.

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THE CHRONOLOGY OF RUSHDOONY'S ECCLESIOLOGY

There is a type of letter I receive which, until now, Z have tried to answer patiently, not always with success. No more. These letters say that they have **heard** *something bad about me from someone else, i.e., that I do not believe in communion, or, that I hold false tis of hermeneutics, or, that at this point or that I am theologically, morally, or what have you, off base. No evidence is offered (for there is none), and I am asked to answer the charges! Such letters are highly* **immoral** *and unchristian. Instead of writing to me, such persons should challenge the* **amuser to provide** *evidences of the charges, and to denounce them as liars and slanderers, because they* **cannot** *produce evidences. By* **coming** *to me they are morally* **wrong, since** *the tale bearer is the one who must be confronted, evidence demanded, and then charged before the church.*

R. J. Rushdoony (1993)[1]

Mr. Rushdoony has issued a challenge. I do indeed regard his published statements on the institutional church as, in his words, off base - and not just off base: completely outside the ball park of orthodoxy. I regard his refusal to join a local church and take Holy Communion for over two decades as a

1. R. J. Rushdoony, "Random Notes, 28," *Chalcedon Report* (Oct. 1993), p. 31.

public act ofself-excommunication. He has insinuated that I and others who have criticized him in this regard are liars and slanderers. This is why I had to add this unpleasant chapter. Line by line, I quote from the primary source documents. Readers will have to decide which of us is telling the truth.

After you read this, if you still have any doubts about the accuracy of what you have read, you can easily clear up these doubts. You can write to Mr. Rushdoony and ask him for a photocopy of letters from a pastor of a local congregation, in Los Angeles (1968-'75) and Vallecito (1975-91), written on church letterhead stationery, saying that Mr. Rushdoony was a member in good standing of his local congregation, that he attended church weekly when he was in town, and that he participated regularly in the Lord's Supper. Mr. Rushdoony cannot supply such a letter, as we shall see. Paraphrasing him: *No evidence will be offered (for there is none).* This is, in my view, the reason why he refuses to answer all such inquiries. (His mailing address is Chalcedon, I-? O. Box 158, Vallecito, CA 95251. I suggest that you send your letter "return receipt requested.")

He has now insisted that someone supply the evidence. Very well. I shall supply it here: chapter and verse, dates and all. If Mr. Rushdoony says I am lying, he knows what he has to do: "the tale bearer is the one who *must* be confronted, evidence *demanded,* and then *charged* before the church." He can now bring charges against me. I hope he does. Then we will get these matters settled publicly, once and for all. (Not likely.)

The Question of the Lord's Supper

Mr. Rushdoony for over two decades remained personally consistent. He did not belong to a local church nor did he take the Lord's Supper except when visiting some distant church on a speaking engagement. He tithed to Chalcedon, as he personally informed me when I was on the Chalcedon staff. He held household Bible studies each Sunday at 11 a.m. for Chalcedon's employees and his family members (who are mainly Chalcedon

employees). Holy Communion was never served at these Bible studies, nor was it served at his Los Angeles Bible studies, also held at 11 a.m., from the late 1960's until he canceled them in the early 1980's. But in late 1991, he began serving communion in the evening. This chapter suggests the reason.

What is my evidence? First, I was there during part of this period, 1973-75. Second, I offer the following statement by David Graves, who audiotaped all of the Chalcedon Sunday meetings for almost a decade in the 1970's. He writes:

> I attended the Sunday morning meetings held by Rev. R. J. Rushdoony for Chalcedon at Westwood California from January 1972 to August 1981, on a regular basis.
>
> During this time communion was never taken at the meetings I attended. No communion service for these services was ever announced at the meetings I attended. I never heard anyone say that communion was taken at these meetings, during this time period.
>
> Baptisms, however, were performed from time to time for members of the group. Some of my own children were baptized by Rev. Rushdoony at these meetings?[2]

According to Gary Moes, this was still the practice of Rushdoony and Chalcedon as late as April, 1991, when he was still in attendance. Moes served as the editor of the *Chalcedon Report* from 1987 until May, 1991.[3] A few months later, Rushdoony bought a set of clerical robes and began serving the Lord's Supper. Later in this chapter, I survey the highly revealing chronology of this radical transformation.

People occasionally ask me where Rushdoony got his doctrine of the church. Since he has never written an explicit doc-

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2. Letter, To Whom It May Concern, Nov. 4, 1993. Address: 7505 Ridgeway Ave., N. Richland Hills, TX 76180-2933.

3. Moes was fired that April; the dispute over the payment of his salary was settled out of court.

trine of the church, this is a difficult question to answer. But people can draw their own conclusions if they know the background of Chalcedon. Only a handful of people do. So far, we have examined Rushdoony's view of the sacraments and the tithe. We need to consider the historical context.

In 1962, Rushdoony left his Santa Cruz, California, pastorate in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in order to join the staff of the William Volker Fund, a previously libertarian (anarchistic) educational foundation in Burlingame, California. H. W. Luhnow, the Fund's director and nephew of the late William Volker, had recently fired the libertarian-anarchist economist F. A. Harper, who then founded the Institute for Humane Studies, located in nearby Menlo Park. The Volker Fund's board then created a subordinate institution, the Center for American Studies. Luhnow proceeded to staff the Center with people who professed faith in Christianity economist Ivan Bierly, the director; Rushdoony; Rev. C. John Miller (later to become a faculty member of Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia); former *Collier's Encyclopedia* editor W. T. Couch; and the pro-Hitler historian David L. Hoggan [HOEgun].[4] I was a summer intern in 1963. During that time, I lived with Rushdoony in his home. The family attended the Sunnyvale OPC: Henry Coray, pastor,

Within a month after I arrived, the staff had begun to divide. By the fall, the organization had begun to dissolve. After I left in the fall to attend Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia, Rushdoony was dismissed from the Center. He did receive a two-year retainer to write what became *The One and the Many (1971),* which he dedicated to Luhnow. The Volker Fund-Center for American Studies ceased operations by 1966.[5]

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4. Gary North, "Clarifying the So-Called 'Hitler Connection,'" *Notes on the History of Christian Reconstruction, No.* 1 (Nov. 1992).

5. The fund's assets eventually went to the Hoover Institution in the late 1970's.

The Question of Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction

Rushdoony moved to the Los Angeles area from northern California in the summer of 1965. In the fall of 1964, I had recommended to Mrs. Grayce Flanagan that she contact him.[6] She did. Later, she suggested that he move to Los Angeles to start a weekly lecture series in Westwood Village, close to UCLA. He did. He then founded Chalcedon, which operated for several years under the legal umbrella of Americanism Education, Inc., a non-profit educational foundation that had been set up by Walter Knott, the conservative founder of Knott's Berry Farm. Rushdoony lectured every Sunday afternoon in Westwood and every Sunday evening in the Pasadena area.

He was still a Presbyterian pastor. His membership was in the Northern California Presbytery of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Officially, he was laboring outside the bounds of presbytery, which meant that he remained under the Northern California Presbytery's jurisdiction while living in Southern California. Under Presbyterian law, ministers are members of their presbyteries, not local congregations. He was therefore not a local church member. This was a pattern that was never again to be broken: any church authorities who were officially over him were always far removed from him geographically.

Bible Study or Church?

Initially, he preached Sunday mornings in Orange County for a small congregation of a tiny denomination, the Anglican Orthodox Church. He had to drive over two hundred miles each Sunday to meet his speaking responsibilities. In the late 1960's, he abandoned this part-time ecclesiastical employment, so his mornings were open. He did not start a church nor did

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6. **I met her while I was shopping in the Betsy Ross Book Store in Westwood Village. She was a part-time employee.**

he attend a local church. Neither did his wife. (Those of his children who still lived with him attended Rev. George Miladin's Evangelical Presbyterian Church congregation.) The Westwood group was filled with people who were unhappy with their church memberships. They decided to move the Bible study's meeting from 3 p.m. to 11 a.m.

These Chalcedon meetings remained Bible studies officially. Had they been constituted as formal worship services, Rushdoony would have had to bring one or both of the study groups into the OPC as congregations. He would then have had to transfer his membership to the Southern California Presbytery. He had some enemies in this Presbytery, so it was convenient for him to remain under the authority of a distant Presbytery. But in order to maintain this personally convenient arrangement, he could not offer the Lord's Supper at the morning and evening meetings. He did occasionally baptize children at these meetings, but no formal church membership accompanied these baptisms.

A Formal Complaint

Eventually Rev. Sal Solis, a local OPC minister, lodged a formal complaint to the Northern California Presbytery. He objected to the times scheduled by Rushdoony's Bible studies, which clearly overlapped church worship hours. The conflict had begun when an elder in his church, Vic Lockman, was attending the evening Bible studies in Pasadena. Lockman was told to set a better example and attend the church's evening meetings. He refused, citing Presbyterian tradition regarding compulsory attendance: only once per week. Solis then filed his complaint against Rushdoony with the Northern California Presbytery a complaint which the Northern California Presbytery dismissed.[7] Rushdoony immediately resigned from the

7. Rushdoony referred to this briefly in his November, 1980 Chalcedon Position Paper No. 17; reprinted in Rushdoony, *The Roots of Reconstruction* (Vallecito, Califor-

OPC, having been formally cleared, before another complaint could be lodged. This was in 1970. The records of the OPC show that he was received by the Anglican Churches of America in 1974,8 a four-year delay. He continued to lecture on Sunday mornings and evenings at his Chalcedon Bible studies.

Rushdoony had based his defense on the fact that the Sunday morning Bible study group was not a church. He could prove this by pointing out that the meetings did not involve the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. For the next two decades, he continued to maintain that these meetings were not church meetings despite their 11 a.m. time slot. His judicial problem was that he ceased to attend any local church on a weekly basis after he ceased preaching at the local Anglican Orthodox Church in Orange County. He was under no local congregation's authority, which (as of 1993) is the only ecclesiastical authority he says is legitimate.

The Appearance of Formal Worship

The Chalcedon Sunday meetings were structured as church worship services: hymns, prayers, responsive readings, and "sermons." There were no membership rolls and no Lord's Supper. That is to say, there were no ecclesiastical sanctions. As a Chalcedon employee, I spoke once a month at these Bible studies in 1973, 1974, and 1975. So did Greg Bahnsen, who was also on the Chalcedon payroll. Functionally (though never officially), our job was to provide an alternative to church attendance.[9] Rushdoony once pointed out to me that I did not begin my sessions with formal prayer, and unnamed attendees had complained that my meetings were not enough like church

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8. The Orthodox Presbyterian Church 1936-1956, **edited by Charles G. Denisen (Philadelphia Committee for the Historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 19S6), p. 349.**

9. Was this wrong of me? I think so. Neither of the founders of this movement has clean hands ecclesiastically.

services. He told me to start running my meetings like a church service. Compromised economically at the time, I complied. I should have quit. But my view of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was still weak - insufficiently judicial.

Prior to his departure from the OPC in 1970, he could have silenced his local critics. He could have said, "All right, I'll ask the attendees to vote to make churches out of these Bible studies and bring them into the denomination." Had he done this, some of the attendees would have taken their tithes and departed. So, there was risk in taking this step. There was also the subordination factor: Rushdoony would have had to bring himself under the jurisdiction of the Southern California Presbytery, subjecting himself to at least some risk of criticism from a few local opponents who deeply resented his conservative views on politics and economics. He refused to take this step.

By 1971 he had painted himselfjudicially into the proverbial corner. Had he turned' these Bible study groups into church meetings after his departure from the OPC, he would thereby have retroactively validated his critics' complaint: he had in fact been working to create churches outside of the boundaries of the Northern California presbytery. He refused to admit this retroactively by refusing to start a church until 1991, after all of this had been forgotten by most participants, his original enemies in the presbytery having retired.

Local Church Authority 1970-1993

The fact is, he has never been under any local church's authority since the day of his Presbyterian ordination. As a Presbyterian minister, he was a member of a presbytery not a local congregation. He forfeited his Presbyterian ordination when he resigned from the OPC. After 1970, he did not join a local congregation. As we have seen, he now regards any church authority other than local church authority as hereti-

cal.[10] So, if we take him at his word, at some point after 1970 he began to regard himself as being under no true church's authority.

Nevertheless, he did seek and receive a formal ecclesiastical connection in 1974. A tiny group, comprising only two small congregations (one in California, the other in Arizona), the Anglican Churches of America, provided him with his post-1974 ordination, i.e., his lawful claim to be called "Reverend." This was utterly bizarre. Here was a self-conscious and outspoken ecclesiastical independent who accepted ordination from an episcopal denomination (officially hierarchical) in 1974, but who steadfastly refused to start a local congregation until 1991, and who also refused to take regular communion in a local congregation throughout the entire period.

Rushdoony's infrequent attempts to define a doctrine of the church are disjointed and confusing because they represent his attempts to provide a theological justification for his bizarre ecclesiastical odyssey. I strongly believe that his writings on the church, the sacraments, and the tithe can be understood as reflections of his employment situation after 1965.

Chalcedon's Overnight Metamorphosis in Late 1991

In November, 1990, Dorothy ("Dolly") Thoburn left her husband David behind in Virginia, took their five chiidren, and flew to Vallecito, where her parents live. Her mother is Grayce Flanagan, mentioned earlier: a long-term supporter of Chalcedon, the woman who first encouraged Mr. Rushdoony to come to southern California in 1965. Dolly initiated a civil divorce, which became final in March, 1993.

In early 1991, David Thoburn appealed to his church's elders. He is a member of a Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) congregation in Reston, Virginia. David wanted to persuade his wife to return home. The elders asked David and

10. Rushdoony, "Nature of the Church," Calvinism *Today* (Oct. 1991), p. 4.

Dolly in writing to appear before the church's session for counselling. They also wrote: "Stop all adversarial legal proceedings in the civil courts."[11] She refused to stop. In a letter to Dolly dated September 17, 1991, the session complained that they had not been able to contact Dolly, since, they said in the letter, she had directed her attorney to inform the session that they were harassing her and that she would have nothing further to do with the Reston church. In their December 30, 1991, letter, the elders again specifically counseled Dolly to cease civil divorce proceedings and advised both of them to seek marital counseling. In reply, she told them to transfer her membership to Chalcedon, which she claimed was a church.

There had not been a Chalcedon Church prior to 1991. David contacted me, as a former Chalcedon board member, to ask if Chalcedon had been a church in the 19'70's. I said it had not been a church; Rushdoony's wife Dorothy was also a board member, so we could not have been elders. (Rushdoony opposes women's ordination.) I recommended to David that he ask his elders to write to Rushdoony, who now claimed to be the pastor of Chalcedon Church, in order to inquire regarding the serving of the Lord's Supper. Shortly thereafter, the Chalcedon Chapel appeared. So did the Lord's Supper

Rushdoony Intervenes

Rushdoony replied to the Reston church on February 4, 1992. The letter was written on the same letterhead stationery he had always used, marked Chalcedon (no church reference). He referred obliquely to "many areas of the West" in which the Presbyterian Church of America "is not acceptable for a number of reasons." He listed its persecution of TR (truly reformed) pastors and its sale of Japanese and Korean missionary properties. This was paragraph two of a letter responding to a formal inquiry regarding a divorce of two of the Reston church's mem-

11. Rev. John B. Stringer, acting for the church's session (April 3, 1991).

hers. It takes little imagination to recognize this as a contemptuous slap in the face: a verbal dismissal of the authority of the elders to bring him or Dolly Thoburn to any account.

Rushdoony assured the elders that Dolly had gone to a counselor. The counselor, he reported, assured her after only one visit that she was not in need of counseling. He also added that the counselor was a Catholic "who could be objective." The not-too-subtle implication: the session could not be objective, being Protestants. (This was not the best way to win over the elders of a conservative Presbyterian church.) He then went on to complain that he has seen modern churches move into "modernism and Phariseeism, and our nation decline." He then insisted that Dolly Thoburn was not under the jurisdiction of the Reston congregation. But he also insisted that he had told Robert Thoburn, David's father, that he would not ask Dolly to return to David because"1 had no jurisdiction." So, Dolly was not under any ecclesiastical jurisdiction. This is completely consistent with Rushdoony's doctrine of the church: an institution without jurisdiction.

That same month, the *Chalcedon Report* (Feb. 1992), on the inside front cover, included for the first time a new identification: "What in the World is Chalcedon Doing?" It announced that "we are a church and a Christian school as well as an educational foundation." On the back cover, however, the magazine still reprinted the familiar description that I had written almost two decades earlier, "The Ministry of Chalcedon,"[12] which identifies Chalcedon as "a Christian educational' organization devoted exclusively to research, publishing, and to cogent communication of a distinctly Christian scholarship to the world at large." Note the word, exclusively.

In a letter on Chalcedon stationery dated March 2, 1992, written to the Reston Presbyterian Church, Rushdoony asserted

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12. It appeared first on the inside back cover of% *Journal of Christian Reconstruction* (Summer, 1974). I was the editor.

his one-month-old claim that Chalcedon was both a tax-exempt foundation "*and a church.* We are *under the* Anglican Churches of America... . ." Chalcedon was not under this organization when I served on the Chalcedon board in the mid-1970's, although Rushdoony was personally under its judicial umbrella after 1974. No reference to this organization appeared in any legal papers associated with Chalcedon prior to 1991, nor were its board members formally ordained as church officers. How, then, can Chalcedon be a church? Yet on April 3, 1992, Rev. Norman Milbank sent a letter to the Reston session announcing that "The Chalcedon Foundation is a member in good standing of the Anglican Churches of America and Associates." Copies were sent to Truman Davis (who pastors the third congregation in this three-congregation denomination) and to Rushdoony.

When did this legal connection initially begin? My guess: January, 1992. The *Chalcedon Report* (Jan. 1992) published an article by Rushdoony, "The Life of the Church: I Timothy 5:1-2." That essay was introduced as follows: "Note: *The Life of the Church* was a communion sermon at the Chalcedon Chapel evening service, October 27, 1991." Note also the name of the congregation: Chalcedon Chapel. Note especially what it was not called: Chalcedon Anglican Church.

The Lord's Supper, 1991

So, in late 1991, Rushdoony began serving the Lord's Supper at Chalcedon Sunday meetings for the first time. He insisted in his letter that Dolly Thoburn was "under our care and counseling." He ended his letter with a denunciation of the elders of the Reston church. Their treatment of her had been, he said, "deplorable." This is a very strong statement for an ordained minister in another denomination to make against elders of the church with lawful authority over a member.

In a letter dated April 20, 1992, Dolly Thoburn formally renounced her communion with the Reston Presbyterian Church. She announced her membership in something called

the "Chalcedon Anglican Church." Yet at no time did Mr. Rushdoony communicate with the Reston Church on stationery identifying any organization called the Chalcedon Anglican Church. But there had been something five months earlier called the Chalcedon Chapel.

Rushdoony's actions led the Potomac Presbytery to declare (Sept. 18, 1993): "It has been difficult for objective observers, including the Reston elders, to not conclude that Chalcedon (i.e. Mr. Rushdoony) took steps to make itself look like a church in order to shelter Mrs. Thoburn from Reston's discipline."

On March 9, 1993, the Circuit Court of Fairfax County issued its Report of the Commission in Chancery regarding the dissolution of David and Dolly Thoburn's marriage. It read

> **8.A.** State the circumstances and factors which contributed to the dissolution of the marriage, specifically including any grounds for divorce for those situations in which either party intends to seek a monetary award under the so-called equitable distribution provisions of the Code of Virginia.
>
> No evidence was offered as to circumstances and factors, including fault grounds, which contributed to the dissolution of the marriage.

The sole grounds for the divorce, according to the Report, was that "the parties have lived separate and apart, without any cohabitation and without interruption, for the period November 1990 to the present." That is, they had lived separately from the day that Dolly flew to Vallecito.

One month later, in the *Chalcedon Report* (April 1993), this note appeared in the officers' box MANAGING EDITOR: Dolly Flanagan.

The Question of Heresy

With this chronology in mind, it maybe time for you to reread *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, pages401 to415, on the bibli-

cal grounds for divorce. "No-fault divorce" is not mentioned.

At the very least, this chronology raises theological doubts regarding the unique timing of the appearance of "Chalcedon Church." I ask this question: Has the sacrament of the Lord's Supper been misused to provide legitimacy to something that is ecclesiastically illegitimate? When I wrote to Mr. Rushdoony on July 17, 1992, regarding the legal basis of his decision to call Chalcedon a church and the theological basis of offering the Lord's Supper, I received no reply. Having waited more than a year, I think it is fair to say that I will not receive a reply. I suppose I will have to wait until Mr. Rushdoony's long-promised and long-delayed systematic theology at last appears.[13] He himself has issued the challenge: "I submit that one of the greatest needs of our time is a radical revision of our various doctrines of the church."[14] Perhaps now he will respond to my criticisms. Then again, perhaps not. But he now has both the incentive and the opportunity to respond.

He initiated the confrontation in describing hierarchical churches as heretical: "Heresy is a strong word, but nothing less can describe the problem. This authoritarian attempt to control other churches is revelatory of a lack of faith in the triune God and an unseemly faith in the power of man. It assumes the virtual non-existence of the Holy Spirit."[15] And he added: "We must separate ourselves from modern Sanhedrins."[16] Separate himself he did, until there was a divorce-seeking woman who required an ecclesiastical umbrella. And then, 10 and behold, there was an Anglican church in Vallecito.

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13. Volume 1 was *Infallibility: An Inescapable Concept* **(Ross House, 1978). Volume 2 was** *The* **Necessity** *for Systematic Theology* **(Ross House, 1979), identified on the cover as part of a series: Studies in Systematic Theology.**

14. R. J. Rushdoony, "The Church: What Is It?" *Chalcedon Report* **(July 1992), p.** 20.

15. **Rushdoony, "The Nature of the Church," Calvinism** *Today*, **I (Oct. 1991), p. p. 4.**

16. *Ibid.*, **p.** *8.*

Silence on his part is no longer golden.[17]

Conclusion

Mr. Rushdoony has called for a radical revision of the theology of the church. It seems to me that we do not need radical revisions in the doctrine of the church. This difference of opinion has been the basis of the visible split within Christian Reconstruction since 1981.

I argue that there must and will be progress in history, including confessional progress, but the confessions of the Protestant Reformation will continue to serve as reliable judicial models for the foreseeable future. I view the lure of radical revision as a lure analogous to the French Revolution. We do not need an ecclesiastical French Revolution. Rather, we need a covenantal doctrine of the church: (1) God's absolute sovereignty, (2) God-delegated institutional hierarchy (3) biblical law, (4) sacraments and sanctions, and (5) continuity over time.

Mr. Rushdoony has progressively resisted the second point from the day that Chalcedon received its tax exemption from the U.S. Internal Revenue Service. Prior to the former Mrs. Thoburn's divorce proceedings and her attempted transfer of her church membership to Chalcedon, he also resisted on point four: the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Let us briefly review once again the historical context of Mr. Rushdoony's doctrines of church, tithe, and sacraments. Chalcedon was not part of any church in the years 1965 -'75. I was employed by Chalcedon, 1968-81. I was on the board in 1975. There was never any suggestion of any church connection until late 1991, shortly after I advised David Thoburn to have his elders inquire about Mr. Rushdoony's membership in a local congregation and his participation in the Lord's Supper on a

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17. I have published this book early before *Boundaries and Dominion*, in order to give him an opportunity to reply in print. If necessary, I will respond in *Boundaries and Do-minion*.

regular basis in that congregation.

Rushdoony and I have disagreed about who lawfully collects the tithe. I have always tithed to my local church. Rushdoony told me in the 1970's that he tithed to Chalcedon. I am willing to supply any inquirer with a photocopy of a statement from Good Shepherd Reformed Episcopal Church that I did tithe to the Church, 1989-92. If anyone doubts that Mr. Rushdoony tithed to the Chalcedon Foundation rather than to a local church, ask him for a photocopied statement from his local church for three years prior to 1991. (Send him a check for $5 to cover his expenses. Make it payable to him, not Chalcedony.)

While you are at it, ask him for a photocopy of written evidence that Chalcedon has ever been designated as a church by a corporate church body or by the minutes from the Chalcedon Board of Trustees. Be sure to see when these documents are dated. There is a letter from Rev. Milbank in February 1992, but what you need to see are the minutes from the church meeting or general assembly meeting of the two-congregation Anglican Churches of America. You also should ask for a photocopy of the letter from Chalcedon's Board of Trustees asking the Anglican Churches of America for authorization to enter the denomination as a church. The Trustees, not Mr. Rushdoony, legally own the assets of Chalcedon. Only the Trustees can lawfully initiate such a large transfer of assets or legal control to another legal entity. At which Trustees meeting was this transfer of assets or control authorized? Were Chalcedon Foundation's By-Laws amended to reflect this change in legal status, i.e., dual authority?

If this supposed change in Chalcedon's legal status was a subterfuge for the purpose of deceiving the Reston Presbyterian Church, there will be no dated public records such as these. If it was a legally valid change, there will be records. Their dates should reflect the former Mrs. Thoburn's November 1990 decision to leave her husband.

I predict that you will not receive a reply to your inquiry. I

assert (again quoting Mr. Rushdoony): "No evidence is offered (for there is none)." He can easily prove me wrong if he has the records. (He can also prove me correct merely by stonewalling.)

In his October, 1993, challenge to his critics to supply the evidence for their accusations, Rushdoony adopted the language of baseball: some people have said he is "off base." I now resort to a basketball analogy: the ball is now in his end of the court. My strategy has always been to deploy a fill-court press. He has always preferred to stall. Stalling does not work when you're 25 points behind late in the second half. We shall now see what happens.

Let me know what he answers.

CONCLUSION TO PART 2

. But I say, that the things ***which*** *the Gentiles* ***sacrifice,*** *they sacrifice to devils,* **and** ***not to*** *God:* **and Z would** *not that ye should have fellowship with devils.* ***Ye*** *cannot drink the cup of the Lord,* **and** ***the cup*** *of devils: ye cannot be* ***partakers*** *of the Lord's* ***table,*** **and** *of the* ***table*** *of devils (Z* ***Cor. 10:20-21).***

For I ***have*** *received of the Lord that* ***which*** **also Z** ***delivered*** *unto you, That* ***the*** *LordJesus the* ***same*** *night* ***in*** *which* ***he*** *was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he* **brake it, and said,** ***Take,*** *eat: this* ***is my*** *body,* ***which is*** *broken for you: this do* **in remembrance** *of me.* ***After*** *the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This* ***cup*** *is the* ***new testament in my*** *blood: this do ye, as* ***oft*** *as ye drink* ***it, in remembrance*** *of me. For as* ***often*** *as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup,* **ye** *do skew the* ***Lord's*** *death till he come.* ***Wherefore*** *whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink* ***this*** *cup of the Lord,* ***unworthily, shall*** *be* ***guilty*** *of the* ***body*** *and blood of the Lord (I* ***Cor. 11:23-27).***

Communion is an inescapable concept. It is never a question of taking communion vs. not taking communion. It is always a question of *taking holy* ***communion*** *vs. taking* ***unholy*** *communion.* There is no neutrality in between these rival communion meals. By not taking holy communion, a person necessarily takes unholy communion. Unholy communion has already been taken representatively for all covenant-breaking people.

Mankind had two covenantally relevant choices in the garden: to eat from the tree of life or to eat from the forbidden

tree. Mankind chose the latter. This fact automatically places every person at birth as a participant in an unholy communion. There is only one escape from unholy communion: holy communion. But only those regenerated by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ can lawfully participate in a holy communion meal, which is a covenant renewal ceremony.

Church or State

To deny the binding judicial requirement of the Lord's Supper is to affirm the primary sovereignty of the State - not directly, but by default. The family is not strong enough by itself to resist the encroachments on its authority by the State. . If the church is symbolically deprived of its sanction of excommunication, either because churches ignore each other's excommunications or because individual Christians think they can safely stop taking communion (i.e., excommunicate themselves before the local church does it for them), then the church cannot defend the family, let alone the civilization.

Autonomy always plays into the hands of statism, for isolated individuals who are outside the church are no match for totalitarian power. Thus, for all their ranting against the growing encroachment of State power, Christian Reconstruction Anabaptists cannot successfully resist it. They have relied on a weak reed, the family, as if it were God's primary representative government. They expect the family to defend civilization successfully against statism. This is nonsense biblically: the family, while sovereign as an oath-bound covenanted institution, is always subordinate to the jurisdictions of both church and State, for the family is required by God to pay tithes and taxes. The family therefore cannot be the primary agency to defend our freedoms against State encroachment. The church is. Christ did not say, "I shall build my family." He did not say that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the family.

Why are we seeing the expansion of State power? Because Christians have voluntarily defaulted by attempting to strip

God's church of its God-given authority to excommunicate people and to pray the imprecatory psalms against its enemies. When will we see a reversal of this political trend? Only when we see a reversal of this anti-ecclesiastical trend. When the self-. excommunicated enemies of God's church stop complaining publicly against "Churchianity," and join the local church as humble men under the visible authority of others, they can begin to saw the shackles of the State from off their ankles. Not before.

Sacramental Sovereignty

The Levitical cultural and social services that Rushdoony lists as the basis of the Levites' reception of the tithe were all subordinate aspects of their primary judicial function: to guard the sacramental boundary around the tabernacle- temple. Secondarily, Levites were to declare God's law and to help the priests administer some of the sacrifices and some of the liturgies of worship - what Rushdoony dismisses as mere "rites." The text in Numbers is clear: the tithe was based on the Levites' sacramental separation from the people – in other words, their holiness. "And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth i-n Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation. Neither must the children of Israel henceforth come nigh the tabernacle of the congregation, lest they bear sin, and die" (Num. 18:21-22).

The New Testament has not abrogated the Old Testament (Matt. 5:17-20).[1] The church's hierarchical authority is grounded on the same judicial foundation that the Levites' authority was under the Mosaic law: its God-ordained service as the guardian of a sacramental boundary. The requirement of each church member to tithe exclusively to the institutional church

1. Greg L. Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian* Ethics (2nd cd.; Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed, [1977] 1984), ch. 2.

that lawfully administers the sacraments rests today, as it did in the Mosaic law, on the uniquely sacramental character of the church. The judicial mark of the church's institutional sovereignty is its control over lawful access to the sacraments. This control necessarily involves the enforcement of a boundary the right to include and exclude. The church's authority to exclude people from the Lord's Supper is the ultimate judicial basis of its discipline. Excommunication means exclusion from Holy Communion: the Lord's Supper. Because the institutional church possesses this sacramental monopoly it alone possesses the authority to collect the full tithe of every member.

This authority to exclude is imparted to church officers by means of their possession of the keys of the kingdom. "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16:19). Without access in history to the keys of heaven, there can be no kingdom of Christ in history no *heavenly* keys = no *earthly kingdom. The* keys invoke heavenly sanctions; often, they invoke visible earthly sanctions. A king without sanctions in history is not a king in history. The most important sanctions in history are in the hands of those who control the keys to the kingdom: officers of God's visible church.

Rushdoony has, in recent years, poured out his verbal wrath on the institutional church in his attempt to broaden the definition of the church to include the family and non-profit educational institutions, and, in his words, "far, far more."2 This is why Rushdoony's view of the visible church has undermined his theology of the kingdom of God in history. Volume 2 of *The Institutes of Biblical Law* undermines Volume 1. What was a flaw no larger than a man's hand in Volume 1 became a whirlwind in Volume 2. It stripped him of his doctrine of the church

2. R. J. Rushdoony, Law and *Society*, vol. 2 of *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Vallecito, California: Ross House, 1982), p. .337.

covenant - a covenant grounded in an oath before God (baptism) - for every covenant must have negative institutional sanctions. His theology allows no formal negative sanctions for the church. If a Christian can, without consequences, decide that he does not need to take Holy Communion in a local church. for a quarter of a century, then what threat is excommunication? The correct answer is: he cannot do this without consequences. It is an answer Rushdoony refused to accept until October, 1991.

Calvinism Without Calvin's Church: A Futile Quest

Rushdoony's view of the tithe has stripped him of his Calvinism, for it led to his rejection of the authority of the institutional church. This has been a heavy price to pay. It is not easy to be taken seriously as a Calvinist theologian when you promote an Anabaptist view of the Lord's Supper, a Baptist ecclesiology, ordination in a two-congregation Episcopal denomination, and a local congregation with a highly suspicious chronology. It would have been far cheaper just to have paid a tithe to some local congregation and have been done with it from 1964 until the present - cheaper, that is, for a person willing to submit himself to another pastor. But after 1964, Rushdoony was unwilling to do this.

Rushdoony has therefore paid a heavy price: the bulk of his life's work is conveniently and illegitimately dismissed by serious churchmen as the work of a theological and personal screwball. By cutting his ties in 1970 with any denomination that was more than a few years old, he forfeited his ability to transfer his intellectual inheritance to someone of his choice. Only the institutional church survives intact until the day of judgment. Only the institutional church offers God-guaranteed covenantal continuity in history. *If the institutional church rejects a man's work, that work* cannot *stand the test of time.* It will be weighed in the balance and found wanting. To the extent that Rushdoony's work does survive, it will survive only because of the continuity

provided by those who remain inside the institutional church, pay their tithes to the institutional church, and receive the Lord's Supper from men who have been lawfully ordained by other lawfully ordained men: the laying on of hands. This is true of every Christian's legacy. If the institutional church refuses to incorporate and develop a man's ideas in. history, these ideas will not come to fruition in history. If a Christian's spiritual heirs remain peripheral to the institutional church, his legacy will remain peripheral in history. This truth may not seem relevant to a premillennialist or amillennialist who sees the cultural effects of the gospel in history as marginal, but it is extremely relevant to a postmillennialist, or should be.

Contempt of Court

I have argued in Part 2 that on the question of church discipline, Rushdoony is a fundamentalist, not a Calvinist. On the question of church hierarchies, he is a Baptist rather than a Presbyterian or an Episcopalian. On the question of the judicial character of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which he denies, he is a nominalist, putting him in the company of the Anabaptists. With respect to the tithe collected by the Levites, he is a defender of the Social Gospel, arguing that their claim on the tithe was based on their provision of good works. He sees the church as a fellowship rather than as a covenantally bonded, oath-bound institution with the right to excommunicate people. In this, he is a theological liberal. With respect to the authority to allocate the tithe, he is an individualist. He says that the church is not a productive institution. This assessment he shares with secular humanism. He says that the State is not a productive institution. In this he is a libertarian.

How can he be all of these things at once? Because he has no coherent doctrine of the church. He takes a smorgasbord approach to ecclesiology: a little of this tradition, a little of that tradition, but nothing from the Calvinist tradition. He has in recent years muddled his original social theory, which is now

explicitly grounded in familism rather than the church. He has revived patriarchalism, which has been at war with the church from the beginning. (Ancient Rome was grounded on patriarchal social theory, and it was at war with Christianity.) With Volume 2 of *The Institutes of Biblical Law* he has undermined Volume 1.

That this should be the experience of a man with Rushdoony's intellect, insight, and vast bibliographical knowledge should warn us all: contempt for God's institutional church is theologically fatal. It surrenders your legacy to others. God's church is not now, nor has it ever been, a mummy factory. The institutional church, for all her flaws, is God's bride. God has no other.

Denying the Church's Covenantal Status

What if someone were to come to you and argue that the State is a voluntary contractual association whose magistrates possess merely fictional authority, possessing no authority to compel its members to obey? You would probably call him an anarchist, or at least a libertarian. What if he were to argue that the family is a voluntary contractual association whose founding pair are not oath-bound officers in a covenantal unit, and who therefore possess no authority to enforce any standards on their minor children? You would call him a liberal humanist. Yet this is what Rushdoony now says of the institutional church. His ecclesiology would strip the church of all covenantal authority.

It took two decades for Rushdoony to become consistent with his anti-church theology, but in 1988, he finally made the break with orthodox Trinitarian ecclesiology. In Chalcedon Position Paper No. 97, "The Church as Function," Rushdoony asserted that the church as an institution is not governed by oath-bound, covenantally established, God-ordained officers. Instead, its leaders are merely functional rulers. While it is conventional for theologians to discuss the offices of the church in terms of their varying functions, it is a complete break with

the history of ecclesiology to deny that these offices are not endowed by God with binding covenantal authority (Matt. 16:18-19). Speaking of the church as a body (but not as the bride of Jesus Christ: Ephesians 5), Rushdoony writes:

> **Now the members of a body (i.e., hands, feet, etc.) do** not hold offices; they have *functions.* The words translated as *office* in the New Testament make this clear. For Remans 11:13, I Timothy 3:10 and 3:13, the word used is *diakonia in* **Remans and** *diakoneo in* **Timothy. The word, in English as deacon,** means a servant, service; it refers to a function. In Remans 12:4, *office* in the Greek is *praxis,* function. . . .[3]

So, to be a member means that one cannot be an officer: function is sharply distinguished from office. Then what is a minister? Is the civil magistrate in Remans 13:4 not a minister, as Paul calls him? Yet a civil minister surely has a judicial function: to suppress public evil. Doesn't a civil bureaucracy have a judicial function? This is the very essence of bureaucracy it is limited by law to a specific function. Yet civil bureaucrat. are oath-bound agents of the State: ministers of God who possess judicial authority. What can be said of the office of civil minister can be equally said of the office of ecclesiastical minister: he is also a covenantally oath-bound agent-of the church.

The New Testament uses other analogies for the church besides body household (Gal. 6:10; Eph. 2:19), temple (Eph. 2:21), bride (Rev. 21:2), etc. Rushdoony has used Paul's analogy of the church as a body as a convenient smoke screen to disguise the judicial aspect of the New Testament offices of deacon and elder. He makes a grammatically and theologically unwarranted distinction between function and office. Then he continues:

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3. Rushdoony, *Roots* of *Reconstruction,* p. 405.

> Thus, what we call church offices are in reality functions of the body of Christ in this world. This fact is very important. Offices lead to a bureaucracy and a ruling class, whereas functions keep a body alive.[4]

Notice the implied dichotomy *bureaucracy = ruling class vs. function = life.* This is not only a false dichotomy; it is a ridiculous dichotomy. The State has judicial officers. The State is ordained by God as an agency of government. Is there no escape from subordination to a permanent ruling class merely because the State has bureaucracies? Can the State therefore not advance in history in response to God's word and men's obedience to God's law? Rushdoony has argued the opposite throughout his career. Then why suggest a necessary conflict between a church's bureaucracy and life? The whole line of reasoning is silly. It is beyond silly: it is desperate. He continues:

> In the early church also, we have no evidence of what is commonplace today, regular, stated bureaucratic meetings of presbyteries, synods, councils, bishops, etc. Instead, beginning with the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15, the meetings were called to resolve a problem or meet a need. They were functional meetings, not organizational they were aspects of the life of a body, not of a bureaucratic organization. They exercised no coerave power, but they did formulate questions and answers pertaining to faith and morals carefully and precisely?

The Council of Jerusalem was far more than a fictional meeting. That Council laid down the law - God's revealed law - regarding what gentile believers had to refrain from doing (Acts 15:29). There was no coercion, Rushdoony asserts. This is an incredible statement coming from a Trinitarian theologian. Undergirding this representative council was *the most fearful*

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4. *Idem.*
5. *Idem.*

form of coercion at mm's disposal: the church's God-given power to excommunicate members who violate God's law. God promises to uphold such excommunications in eternity (Matt. 18:18). Without church officers' right to "amputate," the body of Christ would die from corrupt members who have moral gangrene.

Here is the author of Foundations *of Social Order: Studies in the Creeds and Councils of the Early Church (1968)* asserting in 1988 that church councils have never been anything more than fictional meetings at which men debated the fine points of theology, possessing no authority to enforce their conclusions institutionally. He writes in 1988 regarding the life of the body in contrast to the rulings of church officers: "Offices lead to a bureaucracy and a ruling class, whereas functions keep the body alive." Yet he began *Foundations of Social Order* with this warning: "It has become popular in recent years for churches to profess that they are creedless and that their membership is an 'open' and 'living' one" (p. 1). By 1988, he had adopted the old antinomian dichotomy the supposed conflct between the enforcement of God's law and meaningful living. He would never say this with respect to a family or a State that enforces biblical law, but he says it about the church.

No coercion, he says? Listen to his words in 1968 regarding the Council of Constantinople (381 A.D.):

> *The* **councils came** *together for the purpose of conflict, the battle of truth against error. . . .* **The foundation of Constantinople's ecumenicism was not smoothing out differences and building bridges to the opposition but, on the basis of the uncompromising faith, to drive out the enemy and to allow him no entrance'save conversion. The enemies were plainly termed "wolves"; they had to become lambs before they could be approached peaceably.**[6]

In 1988, he writes: "They exercised no coercive power, but they

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6. R. J. Rushdoony, *Foundations of Social Order: Studies in the Creeds and Councils of the Early Church* (Fairfax, Virginia: Thoburn Press, [1968] 1978), pp. 19, 21.

did formulate questions and answers pertaining to faith and morals carefully and precisely." This pictures the church's councils as if they were little more than occasional meetings in some seminary's faculty lounge. But in 1968, he wrote: "The creedal controversies were not merely theological debates whose scope was restricted to the intellectuals of the church.'" They were life-and-death matters, for individuals and societies, and they still ares If Christian reconstruction is to become a reality, he wrote, the church must once again recognize the call to warfare that the ancient creeds demanded:

> **It is not enough, in dealing with a present danger, to avoid it by citing the fact that someone dealt with the matter in the past. If an enemy attacks today, the enemy must be fought today, but without a surrender of past victories. A church cannot say, if men arise within its ranks denying the infallibility of Scripture, that it cannot deal with these men today, because the confession dealt with the matter a few centuries ago. Rather, it must affirm the old confession by a new condemnation of heretics. This the Second Council of Constantinople did?**

In 1968, Rushdoony was still orthodox in his view of the church: he defined it as preaching, sacraments (capitalized!), and discipline. "The marks of the true church are thus, *first,* the true preaching of the Word of God, the infallible Scriptures; *second, the* right administration of the Sacraments, i.e., in faithfulness to Scripture; and *third,* the faithful exercise of discipline in terms of Scripture. The *means of grace* are the word and the sacraments."[10] By 1981, he had dismissed the sacrament of the Lord's Supper as judicially empty. "As against an empty rite, Christian fellowship in Christ's calling, around a table, is closer

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7. Ibid., **p.** *33.*
8. Ibid., **p.** *219.*
9. ***Ibid.,*** **pp. 111-12.**
10. *Ibid.,* **p. 179.**

to the meaning of the sacrament."[11] Fellowship, not God's covenantal sanctions in history, was his focus. This was consistent with his dismissal of the church as a covenantally bound organization governed by God-ordained officers.

To challenge the judicial authority of the institutional church is necessarily to call into question the permanence of God's covenanted marriage bond to His church (Eph. 5). If the church is not grounded on Jesus Christ's covenantal oath of faithfulness, then it is just another voluntary association. To reduce the church to just another voluntary association is to assert that Jesus has not established the church as His bride.

Despite his rejection of the covenantal status of the church, Rushdoony cannot escape the centrality of the church in the social order. He blames the church for the idolatrous (he calls it) socialism of our era "The central guilt, however, belongs to the church."[12] Why guilty? Because of the acceptance of liberation theology by modern theologians. *But if the church's guilt is central, then its authority is also necessarily central: with* greater guilt comes greater responsibility (Luke 12:48). Rushdoony cannot have it both ways: the church as the guiltiest sinner but possessing less authority over its members than the local flower arrangement society posseses over its members.

The Patriarchal Society

Position Paper No. 97 was the necessary warm-up for Position Paper No. 98: "The Paradise of Women" (June 1988). This paradise, he says, was the city of Geneva under Calvin, when women were granted judicial rights. In this essay, he moved self-consciously from biblical law to patriarchalism, but in the name of biblical law. Having stripped the church of its covenantal status in Position Paper No. 97, he was ready to identify the

11. Rushdoony, *Law and Society*, p. 129.

12. Rushdoony, "Wealth and the State," Chalcedon Position Paper No. 30 (March 1982); *Roots of Reconstruction*, p. 144.

primary locus of social authority the family. Geneva, he says, was "associated with patriarchalism." By this he means a society that is "family-governed."[13] He calls for the creation of a "Biblical, patriarchal culture."[14]

The problem here is the same old problem of all non-Trinitarian social theory the family is not sufficiently powerful to resist the encroachment of the modern State except during times of anarchy when warlords and other familistic local tyrants replace established civil governments. The church, if stripped of its covenantal authority, would become an adjunct to either the church or the State. It could not retain its judicial status as a separate covenantal authority. This has been the drift of Rushdoony's ecclesiology ever since the publication of Volume 1 of *The Institutes of Biblical Law:* a non-covenantal church, i.e., a church with no claim on men's tithes.

Patriarchal political theory moves in two directions: toward (1) national kingly rule by a monarch who rules as the lawful representative of all the families of society; (2) local clannism: the warlord society. In the early twentieth century, the kings departed. Intellectually, they had departed from Anglo-American political thought after 1690: John Locke's seldom-read First Treatise on Civil Government, a detailed refutation of Sir Robert Filmer's *Patriarch* (1680). This leaves clannism, which includes the world's many oath-bound secret societies, criminal and social, that are satanic substitutes for the family.

History does not move backward. Rushdoony's proposed society - patriarchalism - cannot be resurrected without a total social collapse. It cannot possibly resist the acids of modernity without the support of the church. By stripping the institutional church of its covenantal status, Rushdoony has abandoned the family to the tender mercies of the modern State.

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13. Ibid., p. *408.*

14. Ibid., p. *409.*

Conclusion

Rushdoony's contempt for the authority of the church is aimed at ordained officers of the church. He authoritatively warns them that his verbal wrath is representative of God's wrath to come: "Foolish churchmen have often seen themselves as the truth (and also as the wrath) of God. This is idolatry, and God will judge such men. Not the church, nor men, but Jesus Christ is the truth of God, and He alone is our Redeemer."[15] But truth must always be spoken representatively in history. Who, then, has spoken this truth regarding the idolatry of foolish churchmen? R. J. Rushdoony. And what was his office at the time that he issued his warning? What was the legal basis of this authority? In 1986, he was the president of a government-chartered foundation who defended his foundation's right to accept all' or a portion of men's tithes, a man who had not taken the Lord's Supper regularly in over two decades.

To conclude, I can do no better than to cite Rushdoony's two rhetorical questions:

> **AU over the country, I find men retreating into Phariseeism rather than advancing into dominion, and their excuse is a false holiness. No church is good enough for them; granted, the church scene is a sad picture, but will withdrawal improve it? Moreover, are we so holy that we cannot afford to associate with other sinners saved by grace?**[16]

Ten years later, in 1991, he at long last joined a local church that he could trust: his very own. He bought a set of clerical robes and began administering monthly communion in his legal capacity as. . . what? A church officer? A functionary? A father? He has not said. He needs to say. Publicly. Soon (Ps. 90:10).

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15. Rushdoony, "The Possessor of Truth," Chalcedon Position Paper No. 81 (December 1986); *ibid.*, p. 351.

16. Rushdoony, "Sovereign," Chalcedon Paper No. 19 (Jan. 1981); in Roots *of Reconstruction*, p. 87.

CONCLUSION

I. The Lord Jesus, as King and Head of His Church, bath therein appointed a government, in the hand of Church officers, distinct from the civil magistrate.

II. To these officers the keys of the kingdom of heaven are committed; by virtue whereof, they have power, respectively, to retain, and remit sins; to shut that kingdom against the impenitent, both by the Word, and censures; and to open it unto penitent sinners, by the ministry of the Gospel; and by absolution from censures, as occasion shall require.

III. Church censures are necessary, for the reclaiming and gaining of offending brethren, for deterring of others from the like offences, for purging out of that leaven which might infect the whole lump, for vindicating the honour of Christ, and the holy profession of the Gospel, and for preventing the wrath of God, which might justly fall upon the Church, if they should suffer His covenant, and the seals thereof, to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders.

IV. For the better attaining of these ends, the officers of the Church are to proceed by admonition, suspension from the sacrament of the Lord's Supper for a season; and by excommunication from the Church, according to the nature of the crime, and demerit of the person. (*Westminster Confession of Faith,* Chapter XXX - Of Church Censures)

That person which by open denunciation of the Church is rightly cut off from the unity of the Church, and excommunicated, ought to be taken of the whole multitude of the faithful, as a Heathen and Publican, until he be openly reconciled by penance, and received into the Church by a judge that bath authority thereunto. (*Thirty-Nine Articles,* Chapter XxXIII: Of Excommunicate Persons, how they are to be avoided.)

CONCLUSION

And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was *the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all (Gen. 14:18-20).*

The Biblical origin of the Christian ministry is the Levite. The Levites were a teaching *ministry (Deut. 33:10), and the Christian pastor continues the Levitical* calling, *because the priestly order and sacrifice is ended. The Levites collected the tithe (Num. 18:21-28) of which one-tenth went to the priests. The rest provided for instruction, the care of the* sanctuary, music, *health, and, with the second tithe, welfare.*

R. J. **Rushdoony (1979)**[1]

Here we have two radically different views of the Old Covenant origin of the Christian ministry and the judicial basis of its New Testament legitimacy. The Pentateuch identifies Melchizedek as the high priest who provided Abram with bread and wine - a pre-Incarnation manifestation of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper - and who collected Abram's tithe. There is a three-fold unbreakable link: *priesthood, communion, and tithe. The*

1. R. J. Rushdoony, "Accreditation and Certification," Chalcedon Position Paper No. 5 (July 1979); reprinted in Rushdoony, *The Roots of Reconstruction* (Vallecito, California Ross House, 1991), p. 20.

Epistle to the Hebrews traces the New Covenant's high priest, Jesus Christ, back to Melchizedek: "And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life" (Heb. 7:15-16). The New Covenant priesthood is not grounded legally in the Mosaic Covenant's priesthood. Its legal foundation goes back to the original priesthood: Melchizedek's.

In contrast, Rushdoony traces the New Testament church's ministry back to the Levites, who did not administer the sacrifices. They collected the tithes of the nation. On what legal basis? He says that they possessed this authority because they did charitable works. That is to say, *their authority was functional*, i.e., related to their economic and social function. "The Levites had broad functions, including the fact that they were the teachers (Deut. 33:10). When we restore God's laws of tithing, we can re-establish the Christian strength in worship, health, education, and welfare, and we will have done it in God's way."[2] This is Rushdoony's view of church authority functional rather than judicial.[3]

The Bible teaches otherwise. The Levites were above all the guardians of the temple (Num. 18). In this judicial capacity, they were also guardians of the word of God. Their *functions were extensions of their judicial authority*. They were invested by God with the authority to exclude people physically from the temple's sacramentally holy areas.

The issue, then, is inclusion and exclusion with respect to the sacraments. In the Old Covenant in Abram's time, the high priest of Salem possessed this ultimate authority to include and exclude. Immediately following Abram's communion meal, God granted to him the responsibility of circumcising all those who

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2. Rushdoony, "Vouchers, Freedom and Slavery," Chalcedon Position Paper No. 113 (Sept. 1989); ibid., p. 448.

3. See above, pp. 171-73.

were under his covenantal authority as a household priest (Gen. 15). But he had first paid his tithe to Melchizedek, who had final earthly authority over access to the communion meal. God's delegation of partial sacramental authority to Abram was based on Abram's subordination to Melchizedek.

In the Old Covenant under the Mosaic law, the priests had the ultimate earthly authority to include and exclude people with respect to the communal feasts, but a portion of this authority was delegated by God to the larger tribe of Levi. The "outer circle" of exclusion - a sacramental boundary- was the Levites' God-assigned task to police. *This was a judicial function, not an economic function.*

Rushdoony has rested his case for the authority of the church on the twin pillars of charity and education, in the same way that the modern humanists do. The United States Internal Revenue Service (known in Jesus' day as "the publicans") granted tax exemption to Chalcedon in the same way, and for the same reasons, that it grants tax-exempt status to any organization calling itself a church: its charitable or educational functions. Rushdoony offers *an economic interpretation of the church.* This view is shared by most humanists.

In 1966, Rushdoony affirmed: "The church is the ministry of the word, the sacraments, and of true discipline. Without these, there is no true church, even though an institution may call itself a church."4 But year by year, this element of church discipline came into conflict with his theory of the tithe: "We are told that God's penalties for failure to tithe are severe (Mal. 3:8-12), but no human agency is given any right to enforce the tithe."5 Year by year, his ecclesiology abandoned all traces of church authority, including the authority to police the Lord's "Table. The Lord's Supper in Rushdoony's ecclesiology went

4. Chalcedon Report No. 14; ibid., p. 574.

5. Rushdoony, "Inferences and the Law," Chalcedon Position Paper No. 115 (Nov. 1989); ibid., p. 452.

from being a church sacrament to a fellowship meal. This is because the authority of church officers, like the supposed authority of the Levites, is strictly functional in his theology.

On this theological basis, Rushdoony has claimed Chalcedon's right to all or a portion of the tithe. There is a question of mixed motivations here: spiritual, theological, intellectual, financial, and psychological. He who has a lawful claim on God's tithe has a lawful claim on leadership. The question is this: Is this claim judicial or fictional? I answer judicial in the case of three institutions: church, State, and family. Rushdoony answers judicial in the case of State and family. On this seemingly minor point, which is in fact the most important question for Christian social theory, the Christian Reconstruction movement divided.

I believe that mankind's future has been and will continue to be based on the question of the covenantal faithfulness of the church as the central institution of society in general and Christendom specifically. Rushdoony does not regard the church as a significant player; he sees only a race between the family and the State. "The family is the true wellspring of the future, not the state, and the woman is the key to it."[6] He warns, "All too many men are more married to the state and its promises than to their wives, and the result is what can be called orgasmic politics.'" *Orgasmic politics*: a very clever phrase. But what of Rushdoony's newly formed church in Vallecito? Could a similarly clever phrase also be attached to Rushdoony's ecclesiology? He has attacked my long-lost 1981 four-page manuscript, my long-ignored 1985 essay, Jim Jordan's 1980 master's thesis, and his 1984 appendix as indications of our fertility-cult religion.[8] (As my wife - his daughter - asked me years ago: "What

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6. Rushdoony, "The Place of Women," Chalcedon Position Paper No. 47 (Feb. 1984); ibid., p. 218.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 219.

8. Rushdoony, "Elitism," Chalcedon Position Paper No. 67 (Oct. 1985); *ibid.*, p. 301.

does he think that makes me?") But at least this much is true: our view(s) of the sacraments did notarise from the tax-exempt status of our respective ministries.

If you think I am correct about the judicial basis of the tithe, you had better start tithing to your local church. It would also be nice (but not mandatory) if you would send ICE an occasional free-will offering. If you think Rushdoony is correct, you had better re-read Malachi 3:8-12 and Hebrews 7.

Rushdoony and I put our tithe money where our mouths are. You should do the same with your money.

A Question of Motivation

Some readers may believe that I should have confined my remarks to a positive statement on tiding, deliberately ignoring the existence of Rushdoony's antithetical position. On this point, let me quote Rushdoony:

> If a man truly loves a thing, he does not love its opposite. If a man loves his country, he will hate treason. If he loves God, he will hate evil, heresy, and all anti-Christian activities. If a man loves God's law and order, he will hate and resent all lawlessness. There is always an exclusiveness about love: love cherishes the thing loved and excludes its antithesis?

I love the Bible's doctrine of the tithe: local church centered, sacramental, and judicially based. This doctrine is worth defending and obeying.

When a man comes before other men in God's name and announces to them that God has said this or that and that they have ignored Him, the man bringing the message of condemnation - a covenant lawsuit - must be ready to defend himself. Rushdoony has spent his entire career bringing this message against hundreds of men and groups. In this book, I have

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9. Chalcedon Report No. 10 (July 1968); *ibid.*, p. 562.

brought a public warning against him. (I have already done so by letter in private. I received no response.)

His strategy has always been to remain silent in the face of specific criticisms of his published writings. This strategy is misguided. Rushdoony praised the Council of Constantinople for having re-stated old truths against new critics,[10] yet he never responds. I do. When Westminster Seminary's faculty wrote *Theonomy: A Reformed Critique* (1990), I wrote *Westminster's Confession: The Abandonment of Van Til's Legacy* and had it in print within six months. I hired Bahnsen to write *No Other Standard*. I edited *Theonomy: An Informed Response*. *All* of these books were in print by the end of 1991. Rushdoony was glad I did this; he wrote a generally positive review of *Westminster's Confession*. He even criticized it for not having gone far enough - the kind of criticism I always appreciate!

In that review, he also wrote: "Unhappily in the process, he indulges in some serious misrepresentations of my views on communion, the church, the family, and more, apparently because he wants a fight."[11] On the contrary, I summarized Rushdoony's views fairly and honestly, given space limitations. In this book, I have spelled out his views in greater detail. All the reader has to do is read the direct quotations from Rushdoony's works. They speak loud and clear! (Well, maybe not all that clear.)

If publicly criticizing a man's theology because it is wrong is nothing more than wanting a fight, then Rushdoony's entire career is one long challenge to the whole world to take him on. The problem is, he never responds to those who accept his challenge. He calls out the world to fight, and when someone arrives, he hides behind the journalistic equivalent of locked doors. He refuses to respond publicly. It is not a wise policy.

For example, he repeatedly has called various rival positions

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10. See above, p. 175.
11. *Chalcedon Report* (Sept. 1991), p. 15.

blasphemous - such as premillennialism and amillennialism[12] - when, at worst, these rival positions are merely heretical, and usually are only incorrect. Blasphemy is a capital crime under the Mosaic law (Lev. 24:16); one should be extremely careful in using the word as a rhetorical device.

I am not looking for a fight because I know Rushdoony's strategy dead silence in public whenever publicly criticized. Instead, I am looking to warn his followers and others with similar ideas: on the question of the institutional church, R. J. Rushdoony is heretical. Not slightly wrong, or sort of wrong: *heretical* - outside the boundaries of the church's historical confessions through the ages. This is why he never cites any of them when he writes about the institutional church. I do not mince my words. His self-excommunication for over twenty years is testimony to the heretical nature of his views on the church, the Lord's Supper, and the God-ordained authority of ordained church officers to excommunicate those who refuse to take the Lord's Supper or submit themselves to a local congregation. Rushdoony's self-excommunication ended only when there was a no-fault divorce to defend. He then announced the existence of a heretofore non-existent local congregation, bought his clerical robes, and began serving the Lord's Supper.

I predict that he will not respond. He never does. But this time it will be because *he cannot respond.* I have quoted him word for word. I have cited chapter and verse. I have done this to silence him, so that he will never again write on the subjects of the institutional church, the Lord's Supper, and the tithe if he has not responded, line by line, to this book. More to the point, however, I have done my best to warn his followers. On the question of the church, a judicially blinded man is leading near-sighted followers into a ditch. Seeing, *he will not see.*

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12. "Amillennialism and premillennialism are in retreat from the world and blasphemously surrender it to tbe devil." Rushdoony, "Postmillennialism Versus Impotent Religion," *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, III (Winter 1976-77), p. 126.

This is why Rushdoony has never completed his long-promised systematic theology. To go into print in one place with his views regarding the institutional church would identify him for all time as heretical to the core. He will not do it. I have now done it for him. As the co-founder of the Christian Reconstruction movement, I could no longer remain silent- not after his challenge in October, 1993.[13] He challenged me, for I have been the source of criticism regarding his views of the church. This book is my detailed response to his challenge. But please understand: I am not looking for a fight, for Rushdoony is never willing to defend his position when anyone honestly criticizes him. I am looking only for a clearing of the decks, once and for all, so that this movement can go forward without a load of heretical baggage regarding the doctrine of the church. The doctrine of the church is fundamental to Christian reconstruction in the broadest sense. To get this doctrine wrong is to move either toward statism (mainline churches' error) or toward patriarchalism (Rushdoony's error).

If, however, Rushdoony should decide this one time to respond to specific criticisms and refute this book, pay very close attention to his line of argumentation. Ignore such rhetorical words as *blasphemous*. Pay very close attention to his citations from the Bible and from the historical confessions of the church, especially the two that he publicly has affirmed: the Westminster Confession and its catechisms, and the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Anglican Church. See if he cites any other theologians. See if he sticks to the topic: no side issues.

Wait to decide if he is correct until you have read whatever I write in response to his initial response. In formal debate, the judges' old rule of thumb holds up: when the debaters are equally matched, the confrontation is won in the second rebuttal. (When the debaters are not equally matched, you can tell very early.)

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13. See above, p. 148, introductory quotation.

Conclusion

The heart of my message in this book is this: *the church of Jesus Christ is the central institution in history. Any* **attempt to** defame the church or reduce its authority to anything less than what the Bible requires constitutes rebellion. The church must be defended by everyone who calls himself a Christian. This defense includes an economic defense: acknowledging the tithe as the exclusive property of the institutional church. Anything less than the tithe constitutes theft from God.

The secondary theme in this book is this: the world cannot be reconstructed along biblical lines through Christian education if the church is neglected, i.e., if it does not receive the whole tithe. To suggest that Christian education - an extension of the family-is the cutting edge of Christian reconstruction is to invoke to the false wisdom of the ancient Greeks: *salvation by knowledge.* Yet for almost three decades, Rushdoony has proposed a program of Christian reconstruction which rests on institutionally independent Christian education as its foundation. I am warning his followers: on this point, it is time to depart from Athens and return to the New Jerusalem: the institutional church. Bring your tithes when you come.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gary North received his Ph.D. in history from the University of California, Riverside, in 1972. He specialized in colonial U.S. history. He wrote his doctoral dissertation on Puritan New England's economic history and the history of economic thought. A simplified version of this dissertation has been published as *Puritan Economic Experiments* (Institute for Christian Economics, 1988).

He is the author of approximately 35 books in the fields of economics, history, and theology. His first book, *Marx's Religion of Revolution,* appeared in 1968. His *Introduction to Christian Economics* appeared in 1973, the year he began writing a multi-volume economic commentary on the Bible, which now covers Genesis, Exodus (three volumes), and Leviticus. He was the general editor of the Biblical Blueprints Series (1986-87), a 10-volume set, for which he wrote four of the books.

Beginning in 1965, his articles and reviews have appeared in over three dozen newspapers and periodicals, including the *Wall Street Journal, Modern Age, Journal of Political Economy, National Review,* and *The Freeman.*

He edited the first fifteen issues of The *Journal of Christian Reconstruction, 19'74-81.* He edited a *festschrift* for Cornelius Van Til, *Foundations of Christian Scholarship (1976).* He edited two issues of *Christianity and* Civilization in 1983: *The Theology of Christian Resistance* and *Tactics of Christian Resistance.* He edited *Theonomy: An Informed Response (1991).*

He is the editor of the monthly financial newsletter, *Remnant Review.* He writes two hi-monthly Christian newsletters, *Biblical Economics Today* and *Christian Reconstruction,* published by the Institute for Christian Economics.

He lives in Tyler, Texas, with his wife and four children.

WHAT IS THE ICE?

by *Gary North, President, ICE*

The Institute for Christian Economics is a non-profit, tax-exempt educational organization which is devoted to research and publishing in the field of Christian ethics. The perspective of those associated with the ICE is straightforwardly conservative and pro-free market. The ICE is dedicated to the proposition that biblical ethics requires full personal responsibility, and this responsible human action flourishes most productively within a framework of limited government, political decentralization, and minimum interference with the economy by the civil government.

For well over half a century, the loudest voices favoring Christian social action have been outspokenly pro-government intervention. Anyone needing proof of this statement needs to read Dr. Gregg Singer's comprehensive study, *The Unholy Alliance* (Arlington House Books, 1975), the definitive history of the National Council of Churches. An important policy statement from the National Council's General Board in 1967 called for *comprehensive economic planning*. The ICE was established in order to *challenge* statements like the following:

> Accompanying this growing diversity in the structures of national life has been a growing recognition of the importance of competent planning within and among all resource sectors of the society education, economic development, land use, social health services, the family system and congregational life. It is not generally recognized that an effective approach to problem solving requires a comprehen-

sive planning process and coordination in the development of all these resource areas.

The *silence* from the conservative denominations in response to such policy proposals has been deafening. Not that conservative church members agree with such nonsense; they don't. But the conservative denominations and associations have remained silent because they have convinced themselves that *any* policy statement of any sort regarding social and economic life is *always* illegitimate. In short, there is no such thing as a correct, valid policy statement that a church or denomination can make. *The* results *of this opinion have been universally devastating.* The popular press assumes that the radicals who do speak out in the name of Christ are representative of the membership (or at least the press goes along with the illusion). The public is convinced that to speak out on social matters in the name of Christ is to be radical. *Christians are losing by default.*

The ICE is convinced that conservative Christians must devote resources to create alternative proposals. There is an old rule of political life which argues that "YOU can't beat something with nothing.' We agree. It is not enough to adopt a whining negativism whenever someone or some group comes up with another nutty economic program. We need a comprehensive alternative.

Society or State

Society is broader than politics. The State is not a substitute for society. *Society* encompasses all *social institutions* church, State, family, economy kinship groups, voluntary clubs and associations, schools, and non-profit educational organizations (such as ICE). Can we say that there are no standards of righteousness - justice - for these social institutions? Are they lawless? The Bible says no. We do not live in a lawless universe. But this does not mean that the State is the source of all law. On the contrary, God, not the imitation god of the State, is the source.

Christianity is innately decentralist. *From the beginning, orthodox Christians have denied the divinity of the State.* This is why the Caesars of Rome had them persecuted and executed. They denied

the operating presupposition of the ancient world, namely, the legitimacy of a divine rule or a divine State.

It is true that modern liberalism has eroded Christian orthodoxy. There are literally thousands of supposedly evangelical pastors who have been compromised by the liberalism of the universities and seminaries they attended. The popularity, for example, of Prof. Ronald Sider's *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, co-published by Inter-Varsity Press (evangelical Protestant) and the Paulist Press (liberal Roman Catholic), is indicative of the crisis today. It has sold like hotcakes, and it calls for mandatory wealth redistribution by the State on a massive scale. Yet he is a professor at a Baptist seminary.

The ICE rejects the theology of the total State. This is why we countered the book by Sider when we published David Chilton's *Productive Christians in an Age of Guilt-Manipulators* (fifth printing, *1990).* Chilton's book shows that the Bible is the foundation of our economic freedom, and that the call for compulsory wealth transfers and higher taxes on the rich is simply *baptized socialism.* Socialism is anti-Christian to the core.

What we find is that laymen in evangelical churches tend to be more conservative theologically and politically than their pastors. But this conservatism is a kind of *instinctive* conservatism. It is *not* self-consciously grounded in the Bible. So the laymen are unprepared to counter the sermons and Sunday School materials that bombard them week after week.

It is ICE's contention that *the only way to turn the tide in this nation is to capture the minds of the evangelical community,* which numbers in the tens of millions. We have to convince the liberal-leaning evangelical of the biblical nature of the free market system. And we have to convince the conservative evangelical of the same thing, in order to get them into the social and intellectual battles of our day.

In other words, *retreat is not biblical.*

By What Standard?

We have to ask ourselves this question: *'By what standard?"* By

what standard do we evaluate the claims of the socialists and interventionists? By what standard do we evaluate the claims of the secular free market economists who reject socialism? By what standard are we to construct intellect alternatives to the humanism of our day? And by what standard do we criticize the social institutions of our era?

If we say that the standard is "reason," we have a problem: Whose reason? If the economists cannot agree with each other, how do we decide who is correct? Why hasn't reason produced agreement after centuries of debate? We need an alternative.

It is the Bible. The ICE is dedicated to the defense of the Bible's reliability.

Why don't Christians agree about what the Bible says concerning economics? One of the main reasons is this: the Bible as a guide to economics has not been taken seriously. Christian scholars have ignored economic theory for generations. This is why the ICE devotes so much time, money, and effort to studying what the Bible teaches about economic affairs.

There will always be some disagreements, since men are not perfect, and their minds are imperfect. But when men agree about the basic issue of the starting point of the debate, they have a far better opportunity to discuss and learn than if they offer only "reason, rightly understood" as their standard.

Services

The ICE exists in order to serve Christians and other people who are vitally interested in finding moral solutions to the economic crisis of our day. The organization is a support *ministry to* other Christian ministries. It is non-sectarian, nondenominational, and dedicated to the proposition that a moral economy is a truly practical, productive economy.

The ICE produces several newsletters. These are aimed at intelligent laymen, church officers, and pastors. The reports are nontechnical in nature. Included in our publication schedule are these monthly and hi-monthly publications:

Biblical Economics Today (6 times a year)
Christian Reconstruction (6 times a year)
***Dispensationalism** in Transition (12 times* **a year)**
Biblical Chronology (12 times **a year)**

Biblical Economics Today is a four-page report that covers economic theory from a specifically Christian point of view. It also deals with questions of economic policy. *Christian Reconstruction* **is** more action-oriented, but it also covers various aspects of Christian social theory. ***Dispensationalism** in Transition* deals with the changes in theology and practice within modern dispensationalism. *Biblical Chronology surveys the* discrepancies between contemporary humanism's dating of events in the biblical past and the Bible's account.

The purpose of the ICE is to relate biblical ethics to Christian activities in the field of economics. To cite the title of Francis Schaeffer's book, "How should we then live?" How should we apply biblical wisdom in the field of economics to our lives, culture, civil government, and our businesses and callings?

If God calls men to responsible decision-making, then He must have standards *of righteousness* that guide men in their decision-making. It is the work of the ICE to discover, illuminate, explain, and suggest applications of these guidelines in the field of economics. We publish the results of our findings in the newsletters.

The ICE sends out the newsletters free of charge. Anyone can sign **up for six months to receive** them. This gives the reader the opportunity of seeing "what we're up to." At the end of six months, he or she can renew for another six months.

Donors receive a one-year subscription. This reduces the extra trouble associated with sending out renewal notices, and it also means less trouble for the subscriber.

There are also donors who pledge to pay **$15 a month.** They are members of the ICE's *'Reconstruction Committee. "* They help to provide a predictable stream of income which finances the day-to-day operations of the ICE. Then the donations from others can finance special projects, such as the publication of a new book.

The basic service that ICE offers is education. We are presenting ideas and approaches to Christian ethical behavior that few other organizations even suspect are major problem areas. *The Christian* world has *for too long acted as though we were not responsible citizens on earth, as well as citizens* of heaven. ("For our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven" **[Philippians 3:20a].)** *We must be godly stewards of all our assets, which* includes our lives, minds, and skills.

Because economics affects every sphere of life, the ICE's reports and surveys are relevant to all areas of life. Because scarcity *affects every* area, the whole world needs to be governed by biblical requirements for *honest stewardship* of the earth's resources. The various publications are wide-ranging, since the effects of the curse of the ground (Genesis 3:17-19) are wide-ranging.

What the ICE offers the readers and supporters is an introduction to a world of responsibility that few Christians have recognized. This limits our audience, since most people think they have too many responsibilities already. But if more people understood the Bible's solutions to economic problems, they would have more capital available to take greater responsibility - and prosper from it.

Finances

There ain't no such thing as a free lunch (TANSTAAFL). Someone has to *pay for those six-month renewable free subscriptions* Existing donors are, in effect, supporting a kind of intellectual missionary organization. Except for the newsletters sent to ministers and teachers, we "clean" the mailing lists each year: less waste.

We cannot expect to raise money by emotional appeals. We have no photographs of starving children, no orphanages in Asia. We generate ideas. *There* is always a very *limited market for ideas, which is wby some of them* have to be *subsidized by people who understand tbe power of ideas - a limited group, to be sure.* John Maynard Keynes, the most influential economist of this century (which speaks poorly of this century), spoke the truth in the final paragraph of his *General Theory of Employment Interest, and Money (1936):*

> . . . the **ideas of** economists and political philosophers, both when they are **right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly** understood, **Indeed,** the world is ruled by little else. Practical **men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist. Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the air, are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back. I am sure that the power of vested interests is** *vastly* **exaggerated** compared **with the** gradual encroachment **of ideas. Not, indeed, immediately, but after a certain interval; for in the field of economic and political philosophy there are not msny who are influenced by new theories after they are twenty-five or thirty years of age, so that the ideas which civil servants and politicians and even agitators apply to current events are not likely to be the newest. But,** soon or late, **it is ideas,** not vested interests, which are dangerous for good or evil.

Do you believe this? If so, then the program of long-term education which the ICE has created should be of considerable interest to you. What we need are people with a *vested interest in ideas, a commitment to principle* rather than class position.

There will be few short-term, visible successes for the ICE's program. There will be new and interesting books. There will be a constant stream of newsletters. There will educational audio and video tapes. But the world is not likely to beat a path to ICE's door, as long as today's policies of high taxes and statism have not yet produced a catastrophe. We are investing in the future, for the far side of humanism's economic failure. *This* is a long-term *investment in intellectual capital.* Contact us **at: ICE, Box 8000, Tyler, TX 75711.**